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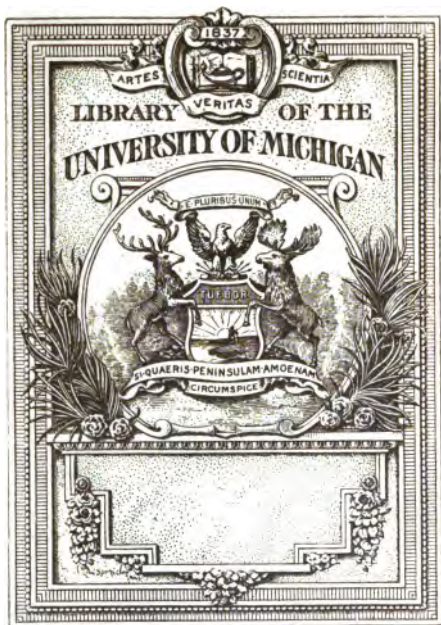
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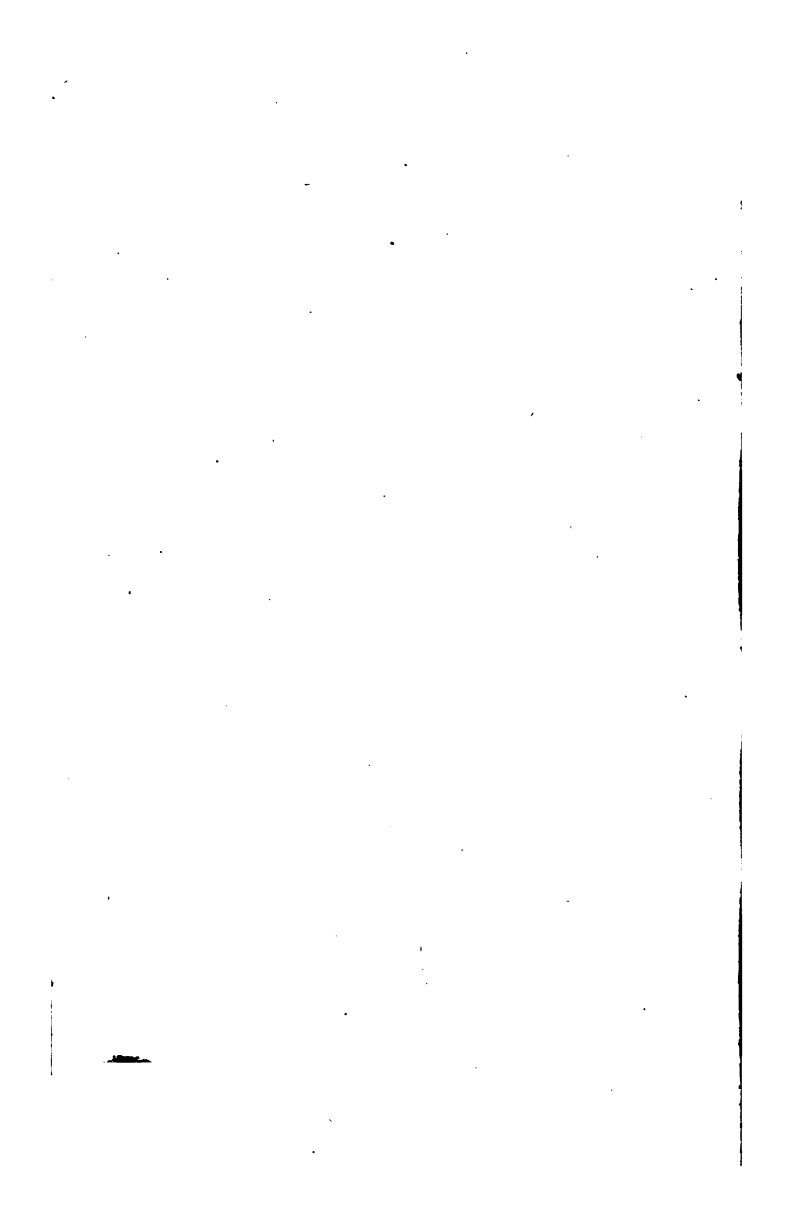


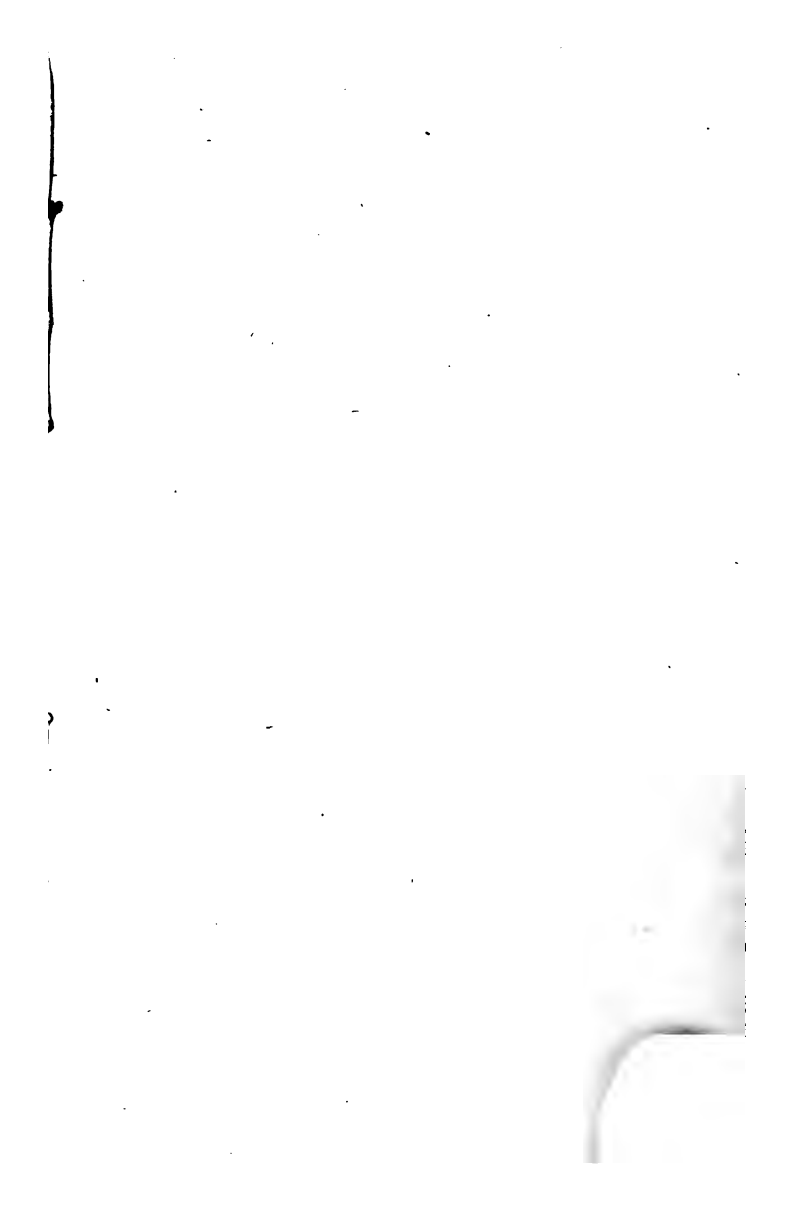
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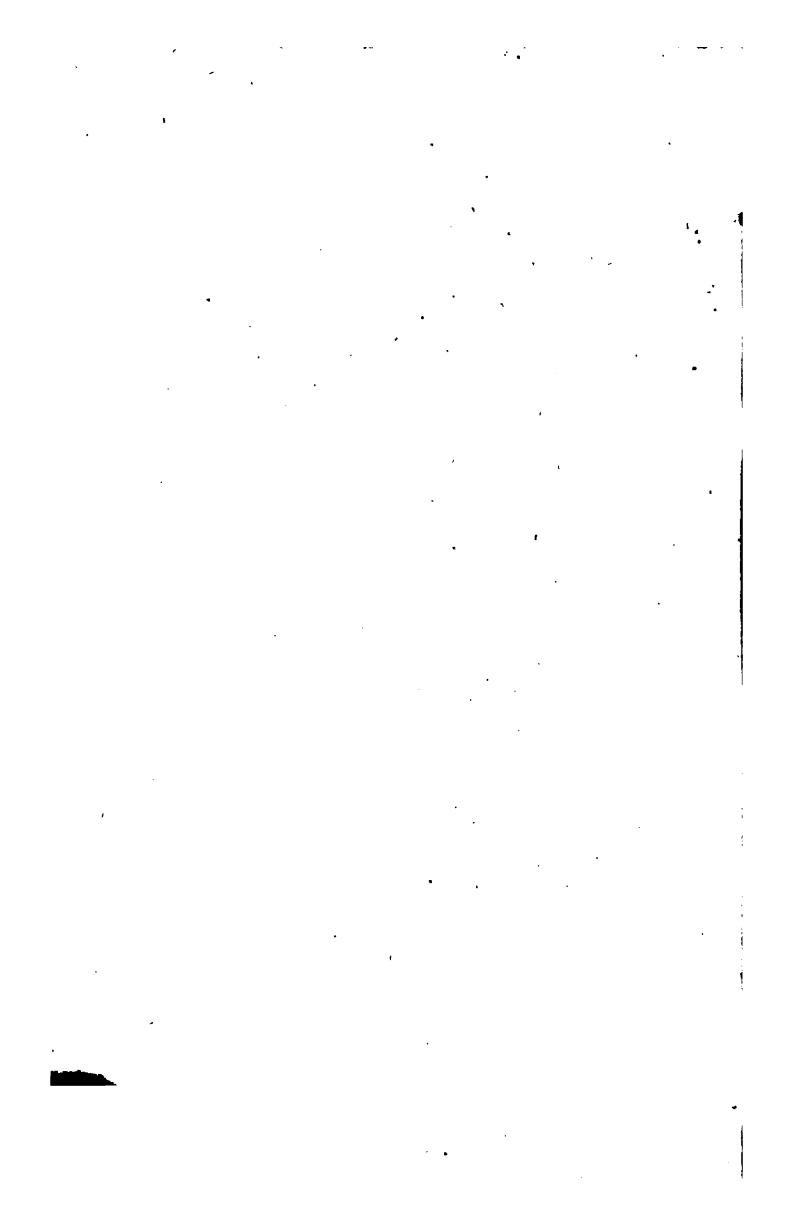
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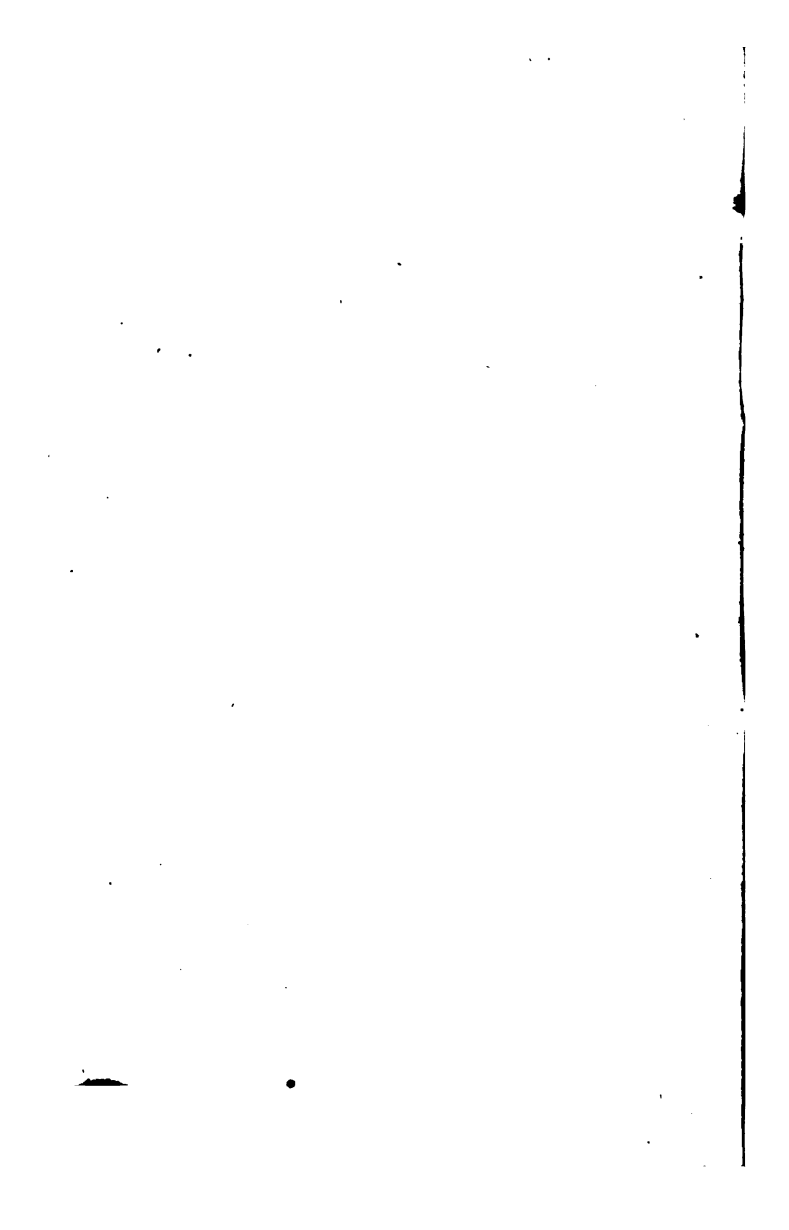
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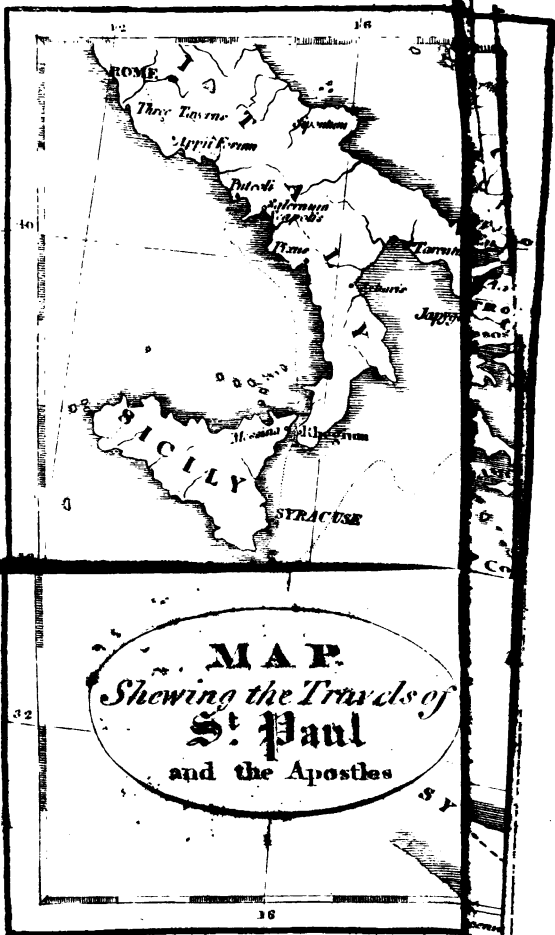












Harper's Stereotype Edition.

THE
HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

BY
THE REV. G. R. GLEIG,
M.A. M.R. S.L. ETC. ETC.

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HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

David reascends the Throne—Removes Joab from the Command of the Army—Joab's Treachery—The Numbering of the People—David's Illness—Advice to Solomon—His Death—Solomon mounts the Throne—His Character as a Prince—Builds the Temple—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4375 TO 4391.—B. C. 1036 TO 1020.

THE violence of David's grief no sooner began to subside, than he made haste to take advantage of the returning disposition in his favour, which was exhibited by all classes of his subjects. There was a manifest inclination in most quarters to call him back to the throne, which the king failed not to improve, by speaking kindly to such as approached him; and when he perceived that Judah alone kept aloof, he took steps to gain over that tribe also, by offering to Amasa, an influential man among them, the rank of captain-general of his forces, in the room of Joab. Doubtless there was more of policy than of gratitude here; but the offer was accepted, and no great while elapsed ere the men of Judah became the loudest in professions of attachment to his person and government. They met him on the bank of the Jordan, conducted him across the river with great pomp, and became, as it were, his body-guards, during the remainder of his journey to Jerusalem.

Numerous were the protestations of loyalty and satisfaction which poured in upon David, now that his power seemed thoroughly re-established. Among others, Shimei, the Benjamite, who had behaved with so much insolence during the king's reverse, now came at the head of a thousand men to implore pardon and his suit was granted, in

spite of the honest remonstrances of Abishai, and David's own conviction that the suppliant was still at heart a traitor. Ziba, likewise, again did his master wrong, by taking advantage of his lameness, and preventing him in his address of congratulation; while Barzillai, an old man, who had sumptuously entertained the monarch in his humiliation, accompanied him, rejoicing, as far as the Jordan. No entreaties, however, on David's part, could prevail upon the venerable philosopher to breathe the atmosphere of a court. He desired for himself nothing more than the king's permission to return to his own city, that he might be buried in the grave of his fathers; but he gratefully committed his son to David's care, who ever after behaved to the young man with distinguished liberality.

The king had not long passed the Jordan, when two events befell: one important only so far as it affected private feeling; the other dangerous, at least for a time, in no trifling degree, to the public tranquillity. The first of these was the arrival of Mephibosheth, to welcome back David to his palace; and the explanation of his conduct which ensued proved not more honourable to the son of Jonathan, than gratifying to his sovereign. The second arose out of a quarrel between the men of Judah and those of the other tribes, touching the right of near approach to the king's person. To such a height was the disagreement carried, that multitudes, with one Sheba, a Benjamite, at their head, deserted the cavalcade, declaring that since Judah chose to engross David entirely to themselves, it was the business of the other tribes to leave him to their keeping. But David, though at the moment he concealed his resentment, lost no time after his arrival at Jerusalem in crushing the infant sedition. Having confirmed Amasa in his rank, he ordered him to assemble an army and pursue after Sheba, who was now wandering from place to place among the tribes, and using his utmost exertions to excite a fresh rebellion.

It was but natural that Joab, who, whatever his faults might be, had always served David with singular fidelity, should experience extreme chagrin and dissatisfaction at the advancement of Amasa to the highest military honours in the state. A bold and resolute man, he determined on no account whatever to submit to the degradation, and an

opportunity shortly occurring to rid himself of his rival, he embraced it with his usual precipitancy. From whatever cause it might arise, Amasa proved more dilatory in his muster than David had anticipated, and as the danger was pressing, Abishai, with the royal guards, were directed to put themselves under the orders of the commander-in-chief. With that chosen band Joab went forth, ostensibly as a volunteer, but in reality to effect his own purpose, and coming suddenly upon Amasa, under pretence of saluting him, he stabbed him in the side, and left him for dead. He then put himself at the head of his old cohorts, which seem to have obeyed him without any reluctance, and following hard upon the heels of Sheba, came up with him, where he had taken refuge in the fortified town of Abel. The place was immediately invested; but from the miseries of a siege the inhabitants saved themselves, by throwing the head of Sheba from their walls into Joab's camp. With that trophy Joab returned to Jerusalem, and such was still his influence with the army and the people at large, that David found himself compelled to pass over the assassination of Amasa and to continue him in his command.

It happened that about this period a grievous famine oppressed the country, and the seasons continuing adverse for a considerable length of time, David became satisfied that the calamity originated in other besides natural causes. He accordingly consulted the Divine Oracle, and was informed that God had sent the famine upon Israel, in vindication of the Gibeonites, whom, contrary to the standing treaty entered into on the first arrival of the Hebrews in Canaan, Saul had, on many occasions, cruelly slaughtered and abused. In consequence of this announcement, and a positive order from God to afford to the Gibeonites whatever satisfaction they might demand, David gave up to them seven of Saul's descendants, two of whom were that monarch's sons by his concubine Rizpah, and five his grandsons by his daughter Michal. These persons the Gibeonites put to death by hanging them on gibbets, where their bodies were condemned to remain till rain should fall upon the earth;—a harsh sentence doubtless, but not at variance with the manners and superstitions of those who pronounced it; while its execution gave occasion to one of those touching displays of piety which are nowhere so beautifully

described as in the Bible. Rizpah, with a mother's fondness, "Took sackcloth and spread it upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest till water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day nor the beasts of the field by night." David was greatly moved when the above anecdote was communicated to him. The rain no sooner began to fall than he caused the bodies to be collected, and buried them with the bones of Jonathan and Saul, which he removed for the purpose from Jabesh-gilead, in the sepulchre of Kish, at Zelah, in Benjamin.

The famine was scarcely removed when the Philistines began to renew their hostilities, and several battles were fought at different places. All of them ended in David's favour, though on one occasion he himself narrowly escaped falling by the hand of one of their champions, and some gave occasion to feats of singular courage on the part of David's servants. Among these, the daring exploit of three champions deserves to be recorded, who, on the king's expressing a desire to drink of the water of a particular well at the gate of Bethlehem, burst through a guard of Philistines that covered it, and brought the prize to their master. But David would on no account indulge the whim which had thus put the lives of brave men in jeopardy. He amply rewarded their zeal, but the water he solemnly poured out to God upon the ground.

B. C. 1032. David had now attained that period of life when the corporeal frame ceases to be capable of enduring the fatigues of war; and he was, in consequence, prevailed upon to lay aside the sword, and to assume more than he had hitherto done the sceptre of civil government. Unhappily for his country, the venerable monarch's vanity rose high in proportion to the decay of his bodily vigour. In an evil hour he permitted his imagination to run wild on the subject of his own and his people's greatness; and forgetting whence that greatness came, issued orders to his chief men to make a census of the military population of the empire. It was in vain that Joab, to whom he immediately addressed himself, ventured to remonstrate against the king's command. David was not to be moved from his purpose, and an account was in consequence taken of all persons, both in Israel and Judah, who were in a condition to bear arms. But

the pride of the sovereign, and the luxury of the people, which had increased to an extraordinary degree, were alike doomed to meet with a reproof. The mustering officers were scarcely returned, when Nathan, the prophet, appeared before David with a message of wrath from Jehovah, and a grievous choice was submitted to him, of famine, pestilence, or unsuccessful war.

It was no easy matter to decide which of the three evils might most easily be borne ; but David, trusting more to the clemency of God than of men, finally entreated that his kingdom might suffer from pestilence rather than from war. His request was granted, and for three days a plague raged in Israel, which swept off no fewer than seventy thousand men. At last, however, as the infection drew nearer and nearer to the capital, David, in bitterness of spirit, prayed that upon his head, and not upon the heads of his people, God's anger might be poured out ; and God, taking pity upon a nation already sufficiently humbled, consented to arrest the progress of the disease. David was accordingly commanded to offer a burnt-sacrifice on Mount Moriah, at the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite ; and the monarch no sooner obeyed the command, having previously purchased the field from its owner, than the plague was stayed.

This was one of the last public acts of David's life, on whom old age and sickness began to press heavily ; but even when enfeebled in body, it was not the destiny of the minstrel monarch to enjoy an absolute freedom from mental anxiety. His son Adonijah, Absalom's brother, and now, in consequence of the death of that prince, the eldest of David's family, taking advantage of his father's weakness, began to aim at the throne ; and entering into a conspiracy with Joab, the commander-in-chief, and Abiathar, the high-priest, withdrew himself from the court, in order to arrange his plans of insurrection. This was no sooner made known to Nathan, the prophet, than he urged upon Bath-sheba the necessity of obtaining a formal enactment from David, in favour of Solomon ; and the king, having long ago pledged himself that Solomon should be his heir, immediately complied with her request. He first of all pronounced, in presence of his counsellors, a decree appointing Solomon to the succession ; and then, for the purpose of putting an end to cabals, caused him to be solemnly anointed and associated

with himself in the government. These were prompt and decisive measures, and they produced the desired effect. The conspiracy was instantly broken up, and the chief actor in it fled for safety to the altar within the tabernacle, from whence he was after a while, on promise of future submission, permitted to retire with the new king's pardon.

"Now the days of David drew near that he should die;" and like a prudent and just prince he devoted his last moments to the duty of advising his son and successor. He warned Solomon of the impolicy as well as wickedness of erring from God's laws, by paying implicit obedience to which, a king of Israel could alone hope to prosper; and then entering into more minute details, he gave him directions as to his mode of dealing with certain persons, of whose turbulent dispositions David had received numerous proofs, though he had not possessed the power adequately to requite them. Having done this, and religiously blessed his son, David gave up the ghost, and was buried in Sion, after a reign of forty years, during seven of which he possessed the crown of Judah only.

The funeral rites were scarcely completed ere
B. C. Adonijah, secretly dissatisfied with the disposition
1030. which his father had made of the throne, began to speculate upon the possibility of exciting a rebellion. As a preliminary step, he determined to obtain Abishag, the last concubine whom David had taken, to wife; and hoping to conceal his real motives, he employed Bath-sheba, Solomon's mother, to demand her for him of the king. But Solomon saw at once into his brother's duplicity. Instead of granting the favour sought, he gave orders that Adonijah should be put to death; and he followed up the blow by other measures not less prompt nor less prudent. Abiathar, the high-priest, was deprived of his office, and banished to his country-house; Joab was slain when clinging to the horns of the altar; and to Shimei it was announced, that though his life was spared for the present, it would be forfeited in the event of his presuming, on any pretext whatever, to pass beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Unfortunately for himself, Shimei failed to pay rigid attention to these terms. He did pass beyond Jerusalem in pursuit of a fugitive slave, and was put to death immediately on his return.

The reign of Solomon, though splendid and glorious, pre-

states few subjects of minute detail to the pen of the modern historian. From foreign wars he was, at least for many years, free ; and though the Jews dwell, with not unbecoming pride, upon the magnificence of his court and the extent of his resources, these hardly deserve from us the degree of attention which other matters demand. His wisdom, sagacity, great learning, and high renown are likewise subjects better calculated to occupy the mind of individuals than to swell the pages of a narrative ; while his apostacy, in his latter years, from the worship of the true God presents one of the most melancholy pictures of the inconsistency of human nature that has ever been drawn. With this preface, we proceed to enumerate certain of the leading events which occurred during his lifetime, leaving the reader to consult the pages of Scripture for more minute particulars.

One of the first steps which Solomon took after ascending the throne was, to ally himself by marriage to Pharaoh, King of Egypt ; after which he offered an immense burnt-sacrifice to Jehovah, at Gibeon. Here he was favoured by night with a divine vision, in which God laid before him a choice of many blessings ; and Solomon, like a modest and upright man, prayed that he might receive an understanding heart and be rendered competent to govern God's people with equity. His prayer was heard ; and no great while elapsed ere an opportunity presented itself of proving to his subjects at large that an understanding heart had been granted to him. There came before him, on a certain occasion, two women, the inhabitants of one house, praying him to give judgment in the following case : They had both been delivered of children at the same time, but one of them overlaying her infant, it died, and she now set up a claim to be the mother of the child which survived. Solomon, after listening to their respective stories, declared himself incapable of deciding between them ; but that neither might have cause to complain of partiality, he ordered a sword to be brought, that he might divide the child, and give half to each claimant. Now it was that natural instinct disclosed the true mother. The woman whose child was dead readily assented to the king's decision, while the parent of the living infant entreated that it might be given entire to her rival, rather than be put to death. This was precisely the effect which Solomon desired to produce. Instead of cutting the little innocent

into halves, he gave it to the last speaker, proving to the satisfaction of all present that she, and she alone, was its mother.

Trivial as the above case may appear, the mode in which the king decided it gained for him the applause of all his subjects, nor were his more important acts marked by less of wisdom or discretion. He regulated the affairs of his kingdom with singular judgment; discharged his own duties in public with accuracy, and amused his leisure hours with literary and scientific pursuits; with poetry, music, and the conversation of the learned and the wise. The consequence of all this was, that at no period of its existence as an empire was Israel more powerful or more respected than under him. Foreign potentates courted his alliance; foreign nations opened their trade to him; his armies were numerous, well-equipped, and well-disciplined; and his wealth knew no bounds. To use the hyperbolical phraseology of the east, "in his days silver was as common as stones in the streets of Jerusalem, and gold and jewels were held in no esteem." Nor was it on account of its splendour only that the court of Solomon stood conspicuous above all others. Every person, from all the countries round, who aimed at a character for wisdom repaired thither to listen to his aphorisms, and even crowned heads esteemed it an honour to receive instruction from his lips.

The distinguishing taste of Solomon appears to have been for building; and the first specimen of it was displayed in the erection of the temple which David had designed, but which he was not permitted to accomplish. Having procured from his ally, Hiram, King of Tyre, an ample supply of cedar-wood, and enrolled whole armies of workmen under appointed leaders, Solomon gathered together large quantities of materials of the most costly description; and in the third year of his reign, just six hundred and twenty-one years after the exode, laid the foundation of a pile which he hoped might endure for ever. But mighty as his resources were, Solomon's plans proved of so gigantic a nature that seven whole years were expended in realizing them; at the close of which term one of the most splendid edifices which the ingenuity of man has ever designed was produced. Edifices more extensive have existed, and

now exist throughout the world: indeed, if size alone be the criterion of magnificence, Solomon's temple

will not deserve to be classed even in the second rank ; but, for beauty of structure, variety of ornament, and the lavish expenditure upon it of the precious metals, we read of nothing in all history to be compared with it. But though thus indulging his own taste, Solomon was not neglectful of the instructions given by God to Moses in the wilderness. In the temple, as in the tabernacle, there was the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant was destined to rest, and which the priest alone was permitted to enter ; while the different altars and utensils necessary for the due celebration of divine worship were carefully provided and judiciously disposed. All, however, was done on a scale of expense of which, till now, the Israelites could have formed no conception ; while, to complete his work, Solomon piously consecrated and laid up in the sanctuary the prodigious treasure which his father had amassed, and which he had designed to expend in the prosecution of the very work which Solomon was appointed to perform.

With this account of the building of the temple, brief and imperfect as it is, we should at once close the present chapter, were we not anxious to meet certain difficulties which we are aware, from personal experience, must affect the mind of the reader while perusing some of the foregoing details. The sacrifice of Saul's descendants, for example, to gratify the vindictive feelings of the Gibeonites, as well as the parting admonitions of David to Solomon, respecting Joab, Shimei, and others, have been felt by many reflecting persons to militate, in appearance at least, against the consistency of the sacred chronicles ; while the nature of David's sin in numbering the people, with the terrible consequences that followed, are matters well calculated to perplex even the most sober-minded. We frankly acknowledge, that after consulting a host of commentators, we have not been able entirely to elucidate the mystery which attaches to some of these transactions ; but of the fruits of our researches, the following may be taken as a compend :—

It has been felt as a difficulty attending the transaction first noticed, that Holy Scripture is absolutely silent as to the time and occasion on which Saul's persecution of the Gibeonites occurred. To account for this, therefore, some have imagined that the particular act of cruelty for which the lives of seven of his descendants were demanded was

perpetrated at Nob, when Saul, after murdering the priests, perpetrated an indiscriminate slaughter upon the Gibeonites, whose business it was to hew wood and draw water for the tabernacle. Others again, with greater show of probability, hold that Saul early began to conciliate the good-will of his own countrymen, by oppressing and wantonly destroying the Gibeonites, upon whom, as is well known, the Hebrews looked to the last with an eye of peculiar disfavour; and that he persevered in this course throughout his reign, investing his brethren of Benjamin, in particular, with the possessions thus iniquitously obtained. Between these opinions we are not called upon to decide, partly because whichever be adopted it will serve our purpose, but chiefly because the main obstacle to the reception of the history lies, not in discovering instances of tyrannical behaviour in Saul, but in reconciling the mode in which these are noticed with the attribute of Divine justice. In other words, how came God to afflict the whole nation of the Hebrews with a three years' famine in consequence of Saul's crimes, and how came he to sanction the murder of seven innocent men, as expiating the guilt of one already deceased?

Had the Hebrew people been entirely free from a participation in the guilt of their sovereign, then indeed it were impossible satisfactorily to answer the former of these questions. But were they thus innocent? So far is this from being the case, that from the commencement of their intercourse with the miserable Gibeonites, they appear to have adhered to the treaty of mercy with manifest reluctance, setting it aside not only as often as their rulers gave the example, but whenever the rulers became negligent in seeing that its terms were enforced. It were absurd, therefore, to imagine that the people were more backward than Saul in the persecution of their unhappy slaves; and hence the people, not less than Saul, became amenable to the punishment incurred by the violation of an oath. If it be urged that the famine in question befell so long after the death of Saul that there is slender ground for supposing that any individuals of the guilty generation survived, we see no reason why the objection should not be met by a supposition equally plausible. The habit of acting with harshness to persons absolutely in their power seldom expires with a single generation of men; and as we read of no

steps taken by David to restore the Gibeonites to the place which they originally held by treaty, it is highly probable that the sons of Saul's contemporaries persisted in behaving towards them with the cruelty which their fathers had exercised. If the case be so, then was the famine a just judgment upon the guilty; while the sacrifice required in order to effect its removal could not fail of leaving a lasting impression upon men's minds, that God would not permit covenants entered into under the sanction of his name to be violated with impunity.

But why, it may be said, sanction a custom so horrible as that of sacrificing human beings to appease the wrath of Heaven; and why, under any circumstances, permit the innocent to die for the guilty? We answer, that of the innocence of the seven men slain no proof whatever exists. On the contrary, as we know that the members of Saul's family held offices of trust under him, we have every reason to believe that they were at least the instruments of his tyranny; while the expression "it is for Saul and his bloody house," which the writer of the Book of Kings puts into the mouth of God, seems to imply that they acted as such instruments not unwillingly. If, therefore, the hands of these seven men were red with the blood of the Gibeonites, their execution was neither superstitious nor impious, since it was nothing more than an act of retributive justice to which a just God gave his sanction. But David's solemn promise both to Saul and Jonathan, how is the keeping of that to be reconciled with the slaughter of these seven men? David's promise was of course binding so long as a power higher than David chose not to abrogate it; but as soon as God commanded the Hebrew monarch to obey the wishes of the Gibeonites, of whatever nature they might be, all liberty of choice was necessarily withdrawn from him. Let it be borne in mind, that when David consulted the divine oracle as to the steps to be taken for appeasing the wrath of Jehovah and restoring fertility to the land, he was expressly enjoined to give to the Gibeonites whatever satisfaction they might demand; and when they demanded the sons of Saul, even though avowedly for the purpose of slaying them, the Hebrew monarch could not refuse to comply, except at the expense of openly rebelling against God. Whatever of seeming barbarity or cruelty therefore

attaches to this transaction is attributable to the Gibeonites alone: God's part in the drama, if we may so speak, was the administration of justice only; David's a display of pious obedience.

Respecting the precise nature of David's sin in causing the number of his men-of-war to be taken we own ourselves incapable of saying any thing satisfactory. From the terms employed recording the event, it will be seen that we are disposed to follow the sentiments of those divines who consider David to have acted in obedience to the whispers of vanity, and in forgetfulness of Him who is the source of all honour. If the case be so, then is David's error sufficiently obvious; but that the people should have suffered can only be accounted for by supposing that they, like their sovereign, had become indifferent to religion. The whole history of this singular nation indeed goes far to produce the persuasion that the case must have been so. We never find them prosperous without falling into vice and idolatry; and it is in the highest degree probable that their successes under David led to the same results which had attended the successes of their ancestors under the judges. Supposing it, therefore, to be true that the nation at large had become corrupt and irreligious, then is the visitation of the pestilence amply vindicated, while David's personal punishment could not fail to be severe in witnessing the afflictions of his servants and subjects.

The conduct of David on his deathbed, and the advice given to his son, though frequently misunderstood, appear to us far more susceptible of explanation than the points just discussed. It is only necessary to bear in mind that David spoke at that moment not in his private capacity as a man, but in his public character as a sovereign; and that his admonitions to his son imply nothing more than a solemn warning that it behooved the latter to guard well against the machinations of certain seditious and turbulent persons. Of Joab, David confesses that he himself never possessed sufficient power to crush him; but he recommends to Solomon a line of conduct to which both justice and prudence gave their sanction. In like manner his observations touching Shimei amount simply to this, that it were dangerous to permit a man whose hostility to the reigning family had shown itself so openly to walk at large, and that though

he had been bound by his oath to keep the sword of justice in its scabbard, no such obligation rested upon his successor. There is nothing in all this inconsistent with the most upright moral character, seeing that the matters discussed were purely of a public nature, over which private feeling ought not to exert the smallest control.

Besides these, there are several lesser points—such as David's conduct to Ziba, and Solomon's treatment of his brother Adonijah—to which some may be disposed to object, but of which it were needless, within our present limits, to enter into any lengthened discussion. Let it suffice to state, that David's treatment of Ziba, who had twice imposed upon his credulity by twice seeking to undermine Mephibosheth's character, was doubtless marked by an excess of clemency; but if it be borne in mind that the king forgave him at a moment when his own heart was more than ordinarily open, in consequence of the turn which public affairs had taken, no surprise will be experienced at the event. As to Solomon's dealings with Adonijah they were at once in strict agreement with the summary conduct of eastern princes, and perfectly justifiable on the ground of self-defence. Adonijah had once already aimed at the royal seat, and by so doing had rendered himself an object of future suspicion: there was no possibility of mistaking his design in soliciting the hand of Abishag in marriage. According to the customs of eastern countries, the wives and concubines of a deceased king cannot be taken in marriage, except by his immediate successor, or by one advancing claims to the succession; and hence the very fact of Adonijah's seeking to ally himself with David's concubine sufficed to convict him of an intention to revolt. Nor can it with the smallest truth be urged that Adonijah's right to the throne was superior to that of Solomon. Had the crown of Israel been, like that of a heathen nation, absolutely independent, then indeed it would have descended by natural order to the first-born among the princes; but, as we have already shown, the kings of Israel were no more than viceroys or deputies, appointed by Jehovah, according to the single rule of his own free-will and pleasure. Now, that Solomon was thus appointed, independently of David's formal declaration, we have the highest of all authority for asserting; and hence to none but to Solomon could the crown by right or justice

devolve. "The Lord God of Israel," says David, "chose me before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel for ever, for he has chosen Judah to be the ruler, and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father, he liked me to be the king over Israel; and of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon, my son, to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel." Looking therefore at Israel as still under a theocracy, of which the king, divinely chosen, was the visible representative, it was just as much an act of rebellion in Adonijah to grasp at his brother's crown, as it would have been had he grasped at the same crown when worn by his father.

CHAPTER II.

Solomon's Buildings—He marries strange Wives, and apostatizes—His Death—Rehoboam's Misconduct—Division of the Tribes—Jeroboam King of Israel—His golden Calves—Wars between the two Kingdoms—Succession of Kings in each—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4391 TO 4482.—B. C. 1020 TO 929.

THE building of the temple being finished, and other necessary arrangements complete, Solomon made preparations for bringing up the ark to its appointed place of rest, and solemnly dedicating the edifice which he had constructed to the service of Jehovah. That all things might be done with the greatest possible splendour, he permitted matters to remain as they were for several months, despatching messengers in the mean while throughout the whole compass of the empire, to warn the Levites and principal persons of the intended festival, and then, just before the feast of tabernacles, in the twelfth year of his reign, he carried his pious design into execution. Never had so large a concourse of persons, of nobles, leading men, priests, Levites, and common people, met together since Israel became a nation. In the presence of all these were the sacred vessels, one after another bestowed in their respective places, and last of all

came the ark from Gibeon, preceded by Solomon and the elders of the land. Numberless sacrifices, offered at various points along the road, greeted it as it passed; but the most striking circumstance of all was that which befell when the priests deposited the sacred chest within the holy of holies—a cloud suddenly overshadowed the temple, filling it as it formerly filled the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the assembled multitude became instantly aware that Jehovah had visibly taken possession of his temple. Solomon's devotional feelings were powerfully affected by the phenomenon; he poured forth a prayer for Israel, which in beauty of language and sublimity of thought has never been surpassed, and he enjoyed the satisfaction that very night of learning in a vision that it had not been rejected by Him to whom it was addressed. But the festivities of the dedication ended not on this day. During an entire fortnight a scene of feasting and rejoicing continued; at the close of which, the people, after a solemn blessing from their sovereign, were dismissed to their homes.

It has been stated that Solomon's distinguishing taste leaned to architecture, and he indulged it, after the erection of the temple, in building several magnificent fabrics, as well public as private. One palace was constructed for his own use, another for the accommodation of his Egyptian queen, and a third to serve as a place of occasional residence for himself or other members of the royal family. He surrounded Jerusalem, likewise, with walls; constructed in it an arsenal and senate-house, called Millo; fortified a number of towns, as well on the frontiers as in the centre of his empire, and supplied them with ample and permanent magazines. Neither was he unmindful of the wants of his people at large. To commerce and navigation he afforded every facility. His fleets navigated both the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, bringing home gold, and ivory, and precious stuffs from Africa and Spain; while by land an advantageous trade was carried on with Egypt and other nations contiguous. In a word, Solomon was at once the most opulent and the most cautious prince that ever sat upon the throne of Israel. He undertook every measure with a view to enhance his own renown and increase the wealth and prosperity of his subjects; and he managed matters so well, as in most instances fully to attain his ends.

B. C. It were needless to dwell at length upon the extraordinary fame which Solomon's wisdom obtained 996. for him, or the visits paid to him, not by philosophers only, but by princes and kings, in order to witness his glory. Among others, the queen of Sheba* was attracted to his court, and though she had heard much of the magnificence by which he was surrounded, she confessed that the reality more than came up to her highest expectations. Well would it have been for Solomon had he possessed that species of wisdom which enables a man to put a check upon his own vicious inclinations. But the case was not so. He who "spake three thousand proverbs, and whose songs were a thousand and five; who spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Libanus, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; also of beasts and of fowl, of creeping things, and of fishes," that sage philosopher and poet was yet unable to hold the mastery over his passions, and through his weakness in this particular fell into the most glaring sins. "He loved many strange women," says the Bible, "of the Moabites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: of nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you;" and all the talent and genius with which Jehovah had gifted him failed in enabling him to withstand their fascinations. In his old age, Solomon the great and the wise became an idolater; the worshipper of Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians; of Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; of Chemosh, the abomination of Moab; and of Molech, the abomination of Ammon.

The consequence of this shameful apostacy was, that God, who had hitherto shielded him from dangers, raised up several daring enemies to disturb his tranquillity. Of these one was Hadad, of the blood-royal of Edom, who had taken refuge in Egypt during David's wars with his country,

* Who the Queen of Sheba was, and where her country lay, commentators are far from being agreed among themselves; the most probable hypothesis, however, is that started by Ludolph, in his history of Ethiopia, and confirmed by Bruce, the celebrated traveller, that she was an Abyssinian, and that from a child borne by her after her return from Solomon the present royal family of that nation is lineally descended. Such at least is the tradition among the Abyssinians themselves; and the singular mixture of Judaism with Christianity which characterizes their religion gives to the notion a strong degree of plausibility.

and now returned to assert his rights against David's successor; while Rezon, a Syrian outlaw, the leader of a bold and predatory band, was another. But by far the most formidable of the whole was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a man of the tribe of Ephraim, whose talents appear to have been of the highest order, as his ambition knew no bounds. That person no sooner beheld his opportunity than he availed himself of it to alienate the minds of the people from their king, whom he represented, and not without justice, as oppressing them to indulge the caprices of a multitude of foreign women; and that his movement was made with the perfect sanction of God a very convincing proof was shortly given. A prophet, named Ahijah, happening to meet him one day in the fields, announced to him by a remarkable sign the channel into which his fortunes would flow. He tore his garment into twelve pieces, gave ten of them to Jeroboam, and assured him that God had, in like manner, chosen him to be king over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is worthy of remark, that a somewhat similar announcement had already been made directly to Solomon himself, with this difference, that God informed the infatuated sage that the calamity would occur, not in his days, but in those of his son. Not a tittle of these predictions fell to the ground. Jeroboam, who soon became an object of suspicion to the king, was compelled to flee into Egypt, where he remained in exile during the rest of Solomon's reign.

B. C.
990. In the fifty-eighth year of his age, and the fortieth from his assumption of supreme power, King Solomon was gathered to his fathers, and was succeeded in the throne by his son Rehoboam. The young prince immediately proceeded to Shechem, whither the heads of tribes and families were invited to do homage; but there was a spirit among them upon which he had not calculated, and of which it is scarcely to be expected that he could approve. They had recalled from his banishment Jeroboam; and now, at the suggestion of that chief, proposed, as a condition of their allegiance to Rehoboam, that he would pledge himself to relieve them from the burdens which his father had imposed upon them. Rehoboam, instead of giving an immediate answer to the petition, requested an interval of three days for consideration; and the request

being complied with, he withdrew to consult those on whose judgment he believed that he could rely. The result was, that the old and prudent counsellors, who had served his predecessor, earnestly entreated him to yield to the people's demands, while his youthful friends as strenuously urged him to crush their seditious disposition in its birth; and Rehoboam, putting greater confidence in the latter than in the former advice, rejected with marked indignation the supplications of his princes. An immediate tumult ensued. Jeroboam, putting himself at the head of the disaffected, made an attempt upon the king's life, which was preserved only by the precipitate flight of the latter and his attendants to Jerusalem. The separation of Israel into two states, of which Ahijah had spoken, was immediately effected; ten tribes declared for Jeroboam, who established his capital at Shechem, while two only, those of Judah and Benjamin, adhered to the descendant of David.

On his return to Jerusalem, Rehoboam's first measure was, to attempt by fair speeches and protestations a restoration of union among the tribes; but finding that the rebels were deaf to such addresses, he made preparations for bringing them back to their duty by force. With this view he raised a large army, and was on his march to try the fortune of battle, when the prophet Shemaiah met him with peremptory order from God to proceed no farther. Rehoboam dared not refuse obedience to a command thus explicitly given; he permitted his legions to disband themselves, and instead of carrying on a war of aggression, applied himself to the task of putting his frontier towns in a state of defence.

The division thus created in the house of Jacob no future events sufficed to remedy. From that time forth Israel and Judah remained separate kingdoms, and, as invariably happens under such circumstances, were more frequently at war than at peace; indeed the steps which Jeroboam took immediately on his declaration of independence were admirably calculated to hinder the breach from being filled up. In the first place, he enlarged and beautified Shechem, so as to render it in some degree a rival to Jerusalem, and strongly fortified Penuel, for the purpose of keeping in check the two tribes and a half beyond Jordan. He next proceeded to strike at the root of that great bond of union,

which had hitherto held the children of Israel together ; by prohibiting his subjects from going up to the temple to worship, and substituting new symbols of the Divine presence within his own territories. These were two golden calves, fabricated, in all probability, after the model of the cherubim, or perhaps in imitation of the idol which Aaron had constructed in the wilderness ; and setting up one at Beth-el, on the southern frontier, the other at Dan, on the northern, he issued orders that before them should those acts of adoration be performed which had hitherto been performed within the tabernacle. In the same spirit he introduced a variety of changes into the order and routine of the national festivals, substituting new dates for old, and new forms for those which Moses had commanded ; and when the priests and Levites positively refused to obey his edicts, he expelled them entirely from the kingdom. From thenceforth the priesthood was, in the state of Israel, thrown open to persons of all tribes, and Jeroboam himself, to give greater sanction to his guilt, was frequently in the habit of officiating as a high-priest.

It was upon one of these occasions, when Jeroboam stood by his altar at Beth-el, that God sent a prophet from Judea to rebuke the idolatrous monarch, and to predict the overthrow of that very altar by a prince of David's line, called Josias. Jeroboam, incensed at the insolence of the speaker, stretched out his hand to arrest him ; but he had scarcely done so when the arm withered, and he was unable to draw it back. Alarmed rather than conscience-struck by the judgment, Jeroboam entreated the prophet to pray for him, which was done, and the use of his arm restored ; but the king took no further notice of the prophet's rebuke, except by inviting him to his house with the promise of a reward. This, however, the stranger declined ; declaring that God had positively forbidden him to eat or drink within the bounds of the impious kingdom, and that even to return by the way which he had followed in coming was prohibited. He accordingly mounted his ass, and leaving the assembly to think what they might, took a new direction homewards.

He had not, however, proceeded far, ere an old prophet, who dwelt at Beth-el, hearing of the strange occurrence, mounted his ass and rode after him. By falsely pretending that he came in God's name to revoke the order which had

formerly been given, the prophet of Beth-el prevailed upon the stranger to return, and setting before him a sumptuous banquet, the ill-fated stranger partook of it. He paid dearly for his credulity in trusting to the word of a man when opposed to a direct revelation from God ; a lion, springing upon him during his homeward journey, slew him, and he was buried in the tomb of the old deceiver who had been the cause of his misfortune.

It so happened that at this time Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, was sick ; and the king, anxious concerning the issue of the distemper, sent his wife to Shiloh, that she might consult Ahijah, the prophet. He sent her, however, in disguise ; for the precedent would have been ruinous had his people discovered that in his own gods their sovereign placed no reliance ; but, old as Ahijah was, the woman no sooner passed his threshold than he knew her. He called to her by name, assured her that severe judgments hung over her husband's house, in consequence of the bad return which he had made to Jehovah for advancing him to regal dignity, and informed her that at the very moment when she should pass the city-gate her son, about whom she came to make inquiry, would die. These were, indeed, heavy tidings for a mother to receive, and for a wife to bear back to her king and husband ; but they were not deceitful, for returning home she found that one, at least, of the predictions had been verified in the death of the child, and Jeroboam, desperate at the anticipation of the others, plunged every day deeper and deeper into guilt.

In the mean while Rehoboam, who during the first year or two of his reign had walked uprightly in the way of his grandfather David, gradually fell into vice and idolatry, till God was provoked to bring against him Shishak, King of Egypt, with an immense army. The fields of Judah were every where laid waste, its fortified towns one after another taken, and Jerusalem itself finally submitted to the clemency of the victor. It was plundered of all the wealth which David and Solomon had procured for it, even to the golden shields worn by the king's guards on state occasions ; and so abject was the poverty of the people after the Egyptians departed, that money sufficient to replace them could not be raised. Nor were other grievances wanting ; Jeroboam harassed the border with continual inroads, more gall-

ing, perhaps, than destructive to either party, insomuch that during the whole period of his reign, which lasted seventeen years, Rehoboam cannot be said to have been at peace. At last, however, he died, and was succeeded in the throne of Judah by his son Abijam.

B. C. 973. Of a brave and manly character, Abijam no sooner assumed the reins of government, than he determined to put an end to the desultory warfare which Jeroboam waged against his subjects. With this view, he raised a prodigious army of 400,000 men, and marching into the territory of Ephraim, took up a position on the rising ground above Zemaraim. There he was met by Jeroboam at the head of 800,000 men, to whom the young prince previous to the commencement of hostilities addressed an eloquent and touching oration, but the Israelites moving on to the attack, he was compelled to stand upon his defence. A furious battle was fought, which, notwithstanding their inferiority in point of numbers, ended in favour of the troops of Judah, the loss of the Israelites amounting to the almost incredible number of 500,000 men; and many fortified towns, with Beth-el among the rest, fell into the hands of the victors. But though Abijam began his career thus prosperously, he seems to have early followed the impious example of his predecessor. His days were accordingly cut short, and after a reign of three years he died, and was succeeded by his son Asa.

B. C. 970. The government of Asa was upon the whole exceedingly prosperous, while Asa himself, at least during the greater proportion of it, seems to have been a just and a religious prince. He exerted himself with singular vigour to eradicate the vices which his predecessors had sanctioned in Judah, expelling even his own mother from the court because she persisted in the practice of idolatry; and God, according to his invariable custom, gave him success in all his undertakings. His kingdom being invaded by Zerah, King of Ethiopia, Asa, at the head of a very inferior force, totally defeated him; and following up his successes, plundered the enemy's camp, smote the cities that were in league with him, and returned in triumph to Jerusalem. From this period, during an interval of five years, Judah enjoyed a state of profound peace, which Asa employed in following up his good work, by cutting down the groves

and removing the symbols of idolatry from the land, and after restoring to its primitive magnificence the worship of Jehovah, he caused his people to enter with him into a solemn engagement on no account whatever to forsake the true God. The consequence of this was, that God commissioned the prophet Azariah to assure him of his protection and favour, while multitudes of the Israelites, dissatisfied with the state of things at home, flocked over, day by day, to his dominions.

While Asa was thus piously conducting himself in Jerusalem, Jeroboam paid the debt of nature, and was succeeded by his son Nadab, a weak and wicked prince. The latter, after a short and inglorious reign of two years, became the victim of a conspiracy, and Baasha, captain-general of his forces, usurped the throne. To secure himself in his ill-gotten seat, Baasha made haste to fulfil the prophecy which Abijah had uttered respecting the family of Jeroboam, and cruelly caused every male belonging to the house of his old master to be put to death. But it cannot be said that in point of moral worth the dynasty of Israel was changed greatly for the better. Baasha, not less than Nadab, was an idolater, "for he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin, wherewith he made Israel to sin."

Baasha, though a wicked, appears not to have been a weak man, and he accordingly adopted measures at once to check the emigration of his subjects, and to reduce the power of his rival, King Asa. With this design he poured an army into the country of Benjamin, and seizing a strong post at Ramah, began to build a fort there for the purpose of overawing Jerusalem. Under these circumstances King Asa formed the imprudent resolution to purchase the alliance of Ben-hadad, King of Syria; for which purpose he robbed the sanctuary of all its treasures, and sent them to the heathen monarch. The bribe produced its effect, for Ben-hadad instantly advanced against the kingdom of Israel, which compelled Baasha to withdraw his troops from Ramah, and the latter place, being seized by Asa, was forthwith dismantled. But God was offended with Asa for his want of faith, and sent the prophet Hanani to upbraid him with his ingratitude. It is not very easy to determine from what cause the circumstance arose, but Asa seems at this

time to have totally changed his character. Instead of receiving the Divine reproof with a submissive spirit, he cast the bearer of it into prison, and giving loose to a violence of temper not hitherto observed in him, began in various ways to oppress and tyrannize over the people. At last, however, some painful disease, which commentators believe to have been the gout, put an end to his life. He died in the one-and-fortieth year of his reign, being the first of the Jewish kings who caused his body to be burned, and the ashes only deposited in a sepulchre.

The same longevity among individuals, and the same regularity of succession which was granted to the dynasty of David, by no means prevailed in the rival state of Israel. King Baasha, for example, after swaying the sceptre during twenty-three years, left it to his son Ela, a vicious and improvident character even among the vicious sovereigns of the day, who was murdered in the second year after his accession by one Zimri, a principal officer of his cavalry, while indulging in a revel at the abode of Arza, the steward of his house. Zimri immediately seized the crown, which he wore only seven days, for the army refused to acknowledge him, though he had put all the male issue of Baasha to death; upon which he shut himself up in Tirzah, and finding that it could not long withstand the fury of an assault, set fire to the palace, and perished amid the flames. A civil war now arose between Omri, the general-in-chief, and Tibni, the son of Ginah, each of whom, supported by a powerful faction, aspired to the sovereignty; but in the end fortune declared for Omri, his rival being slain in battle. Omri then mounted the throne of Israel, and rendered his name infamous by a more than ordinary devotion to vice and idolatry. Not satisfied with commanding devotion to be paid to the golden calves of Jeroboam, he introduced the deities of the surrounding nations into Israel, and caused the land to be polluted from one extremity to the other by the most obscene rites and hideous practices.

This Omri, who was the founder of Samaria, the future capital of the nation, held the reins of government eleven years; and was succeeded by his son Ahab, of whom more in the sequel.

We are not aware that the preceding details embrace so much as a single point concerning which the most fasti-

dious would be justified in raising a question. No doubt the apostacy of Solomon is a striking fact; but it is only one more in addition to the many proofs with which history and experience alike supply us, that the passions and appetites when indulged to excess always obtain the mastery over reason. Had the King of Israel paid due attention to the Divine law, and abstained from "multiplying unto himself wives from among strange nations," no such humiliating blot would have fallen upon his character; but in giving unbridled license to his desires, he became at last their slave and, as a necessary consequence, the tool of those by whom they were excited. As to his ultimate fate, whether he persisted to the last in the practice of forbidden rites, or saw his error and returned in penitence to Jehovah, we are not justified in giving any decided opinion; but the generality of commentators conceive that he did repent, and that his Book of Ecclesiastes was composed as a sort of penitential hymn. Be this as it may, one thing is very certain, that a more memorable example of the frailty of human nature is nowhere to be found; nor can it be doubted that the narrative of Solomon's fall stands on record in Scripture as a warning to all men in all ages and nations.

Again, the conduct of Jeroboam in setting up golden calves, and the facility with which he appears to have prevailed upon his subjects to treat them with religious deference, ought not to excite surprise in the mind of any candid inquirer. Why the particular form of a calf was chosen for his idol it is difficult to discover. Probably Jeroboam adopted that symbol in imitation of the cherubim which surmounted the mercy-seat; or it may be, that having lately returned from Egypt, he brought back with him a feeling of partiality for the sacred ox, the great god of the Egyptians. But whatever motives might actuate him in this particular, his reasons for attempting at least to introduce idolatry into Israel he himself has given. It is quite evident, that as long as the people continued to attend the great festivals at Jerusalem, and to join their brethren of Judah in a common worship, so long would his hold upon their allegiance be insecure: policy, therefore, not less than an inherent predilection for a false religion, led him into the measure which he actually adopted. We are not, however, bound to believe

that either Jeroboam or his subjects absolutely apostatized, all at once, from the worship of Jehovah. The probability is that they did not, and that the calves were placed at Beth-el and Dan for no other purpose than to act as a species of emblem, through which the God of heaven and earth might be addressed. We know, however, that to idolatry the Israelites were singularly prone from the hour of their deliverance out of Egypt up to the Babylonish captivity; and hence we cannot hesitate to believe that a worship originally pure, or at the worst mixed, because poured forth before a forbidden object, speedily degenerated into absolute idolatry. Of this indeed the language of Scripture seems to assure us; since we find all the vices of Israel traced back to Jeroboam as their author, and himself invariably spoken of as the individual who made Israel to sin.

The case is somewhat different with respect to the story of the young prophet who was commissioned to prophesy against Jeroboam's altar, and perished so miserably. It has been felt as a difficulty by many persons; yet, if due attention be paid to all the circumstances of the case, it will appear that the prophet's fate, miserable as it is represented to have been, was richly merited.

Whenever Almighty God employed any man as a messenger or instrument in his dealings with others, we may rest assured that he always took care to stamp upon the mind of the person so employed a vivid and lasting impression that he was really acting under Divine impulse. Such an impression had without doubt been made on the mind of the young prophet; while the miracles performed in his favour, the withering of Jeroboam's hand and the rending of his altar, were alone sufficient to convince him that God was his director. Among other matters, however, supernaturally communicated to him, was a positive command from Jehovah that he should on no account whatever eat or drink among the idolaters of Beth-el, inasmuch as his holding the slightest degree of friendly intercourse or familiarity with them could not fail to bring both himself and his message into contempt. This command the young prophet chose to disobey, on the invitation of one concerning whose piety and regard to truth he had no reason to entertain very elevated notions; and, without waiting for any sign from God, he bent his steps back again, to do the very deed which had been prohibited.

Had God permitted this man to live, the whole solemnity of his denunciation would have been destroyed. The Israelites, seeing the very individual who communicated to them God's angry message violate with impunity the Divine will in a matter of which he had openly spoken, would have naturally regarded the whole transaction as an imposture; and thus the purpose for which God had employed him would have been defeated. Though the old prophet, therefore, was unquestionably very guilty in seeking to deceive his brother into a breach of God's will, the young prophet was not less blameable in permitting himself thus to be deceived, inasmuch as no miracle was performed to convince him that his compeer spoke the truth; while the fact of that compeer continuing to dwell in a place so polluted as Beth-el ought to have convinced him that he spoke falsely.

Some surprise may possibly be excited at the invasion of Judea by the King of Egypt, seeing that between him and Solomon a strict alliance, resting upon the basis of a family union, had long subsisted. In this case it is only necessary to bear in mind that Rehoboam was not the son of the Egyptian princess, but of an Ammonite, towards whom it was not to be expected that Shishak would look with a partial eye; but had the contrary been the fact, every reader of history must be aware, that though princes and kings intermarry, there is no relationship among kingdoms. Neither the reception, therefore, of Jeroboam at the Egyptian court, nor the subsequent plunder of Jerusalem by the Egyptian monarch, are legitimate subjects of astonishment. In the former instance, Pharaoh was probably instigated by a desire to see his neighbour and brother-in-law kept quiet, through the apprehension of intestine troubles; in the latter, ambition and the thirst of plunder prevailed, as they usually do, over principles of abstract right.

There is but one other subject concerning which we deem it right to say something previous to bringing the present chapter to a close. We allude to the prophets whom God from time to time employed in declaring his will to the kings and people of Israel. Who these men were, where educated, or how distinguished from other persons, as Scripture furnishes no definite information, it is of course impossible satisfactorily to determine. St. Austin, indeed, contends that they usually dwelt apart from general society in a

sort of community of their own; their disciples devoting their time to study, prayer, and meditation; that their habitations were plain and simple, constructed entirely of wood, and reared by their own hands; and that they exercised no trade or profession, nor undertook any employment which might be inconsistent with the repose which their pious calling required. Thus Elisha quitted his plough when Elijah called him to the prophetic office, nor ever, as far as we know, returned to it; while Zechariah speaks of a certain person as a husbandman, in contradistinction to a prophet. The same father takes it for granted that their dress was peculiar: a coarse, rough habit of a dark brown colour, like that worn by Isaiah, or a garment of skins with a leathern girdle, such as Elijah used; and that some practice of this kind prevailed, the declaration of Zechariah would seem to denote, when he says of the false prophets that the time should come when they would no longer "wear a rough garment to deceive." That they were for the most part poor, and despisers of wealth and luxury, all that is recorded of them demonstrates. Hence the woman of Sarepta, who entertained Elisha, put into the prophet's chamber no other furniture than what was absolutely needed; while the same prophet refused the rich presents offered by Naaman, the Syrian, and expelled from his presence Gehazi, because he had accepted them. Bread, fruits, and honey were the only gifts they would receive; and their ordinary diet seldom consisted of other fare than bread or vegetables and water. Thus we read, at 2 Kings iv. 38—40, of a certain prophet who entertained his brother with boiled gourds; the angel gave to Elijah only bread and water to fit him for a long journey; and Obadiah, governor of Ahab's house, when he nourished the prophets in caves, supported them there with the same simple viands.

With respect again to the offices or duties of the prophets, it is worthy of remark that these seem to have differed widely, not only in different persons, but even in the same person at different times and under different circumstances. The mere English reader is, we need not observe, in the habit of considering a prophet in the single light of a person to whom God has granted the faculty of foretelling future events; but this is by no means a legitimate interpretation of the term. Many true prophets, as for example the

multitudes whom Obadiah preserved from the fury of his master, possessed no such quality of prescience ; while the instances on record in which false prophets were compelled to predict calamities to themselves and their friends are numerous. Thus Balaam, though an idolatrous soothsayer, was made the instrument by which the Moabites should be warned of the ruin which awaited them ; while the old prophet of Beth-el assured those about him that not a tittle of all that his victim had uttered touching the altar and those who sacrificed upon it should fall to the ground. The truth, therefore, appears to be, that the term *prophet* is employed in Scripture to denote indifferently all those persons who instructed others in religion and morals, whether their power of so doing sprang from immediate revelation or not. And it was doubtless to prepare them, as far as by human means they could be prepared for this important office, that the college or school of Ramoth was founded by Samuel. But though such be undeniably the case, it is nevertheless perfectly evident that from the days of Samuel down to the return from the Babylonish captivity there flourished, at least in the kingdom of Judah, a succession of illustrious individuals, on whom all the graces which we are accustomed to associate in our own minds with the prophetic office rested. These acted the part of messengers between Jehovah and his earthly representatives ; and, as the history of the latter demonstrates, they were uniformly treated as such both by the monarch and the people. Why this important trust should have been withdrawn from the high-priest, as under the royal government seems in a great degree to have been the case, we are not informed. The rabbins pretend not to assign any reason for the circumstance, since they content themselves with affirming that the mode of consulting God by Urim and Thummim ceased as soon as the tabernacle gave place to the temple ; from which period till the captivity Jehovah spoke his sentiments through the instrumentality of prophets. It were needless, therefore, to waste our own and our readers' time in hazarding conjectures on a subject in itself of no vital importance ; but it may be observed that the establishment of such an order of men was even more strictly in agreement with the principles of a theocracy than it would have been to leave the high-priest, after the establishment of a monarchy, in possession of his original honours. The

high-priest, residing constantly at court, could hardly fail of becoming, to a greater or less degree, subservient to the humours of the reigning prince; as such he might easily be prevailed upon to deliver only such judgments as the prince might desire to issue from him; whereas, the prophet being free from the allurements of avarice, and totally independent both of king and people, would deliver only such messages as God intrusted to him. Of the truth of this statement, indeed, our history, as we proceed, will furnish abundant proofs; and if the case be so, then were it needless to look further for the motive which prompted the Divine King of Israel to work so marked a change in his manner of dealing with his people.

CHAPTER III.

Succession of Sovereigns in Judah and Israel—The Prophets Elijah and Elisha—Their wonderful Acts—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4482.—B. C. 929.

ASA, King of Judah, was succeeded on the throne by his son Jehoshaphat, a prince eminent among the best of David's line for purity and uprightness of character. He was thirty-five years of age at his father's decease, and he swayed the sceptre five-and-twenty years, during the greater portion of which both he and his subjects enjoyed the highest degree of prosperity. Like those of other righteous princes, his annals present few features on which the historian finds it practicable to dwell, and of these a few words will suffice to give a sufficiently accurate account. Jehoshaphat began his reign with a display of more than common zeal in favour of true religion and good morals. He rooted out from the soil of Judah all the unnatural criminals whom his father's negligence or mistaken clemency had spared; and he cut down the altars, and overthrew the images of the idolaters wherever such were to be found. Not content, however, with waging war against the enemies of Jehovah, he applied himself sedulously to the task of instructing his people generally in the law of Moses; for which purpose he sent

priests and Levites throughout the whole of his dominions ; and he scrupled not, from time to time, to traverse the country in person, in order to ascertain that his judges and those in authority did their duty. The consequence of all this was, that God was with him ; the people revered and loved him ; his enemies feared him ; the Philistines, who had meditated a revolt, willingly paid him tribute ; and the Arabians sent him annually presents of sheep and goats as an acknowledgment of their dependence. In one particular only Jehoshaphat committed a striking error ; namely, in contracting an alliance with his neighbour Ahab, King of Israel, by taking a daughter of that line to be the wife of his own son Jehoram.

The King of Israel with whom Jehoshaphat thus entered into bands of amity and relationship was the same Ahab of whom cursory mention was made at the close of the preceding chapter. Among the many impious and immoral princes who filled the throne of Israel, Ahab was one of the most impious and most immoral ; far surpassing even Jeroboam in the atrocity of his general conduct, as he far exceeded him in the grossness of his idolatries. Not satisfied to continue the worship of the golden calves, Ahab, in compliment to his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre, erected a temple to Baal in Samaria itself ; and planted a grove, within whose limits the most flagrant impurities were committed. So extravagant, indeed, was he in his zeal for idolatry, that he set himself sedulously to the task of corrupting his subjects ; and among a people prone as the Israelites always were to indulge their meaner passions it is by no means suprising to find that he perfectly succeeded. Perhaps at no period were the ten tribes more corrupt than during his reign. The worship of Jehovah was almost universally neglected ; nay, so far was impiety carried that one man, by name Hiel, as if in defiance of God's will and the denunciation of Joshua, actually applied himself to the labour of rebuilding Jericho. He accomplished his undertaking, because it had never been decreed that Jericho should not be rebuilt ; but he fulfilled, at the same time, the prophecy of the conqueror of Canaan.* The eldest of his sons died as soon as he had laid the foundation-stone, and the youngest and last lived only to see his father's operations finished.

In the midst of so much profligacy and irreligion, it pleased God to raise up the most illustrious of all the prophets of whom mention is made in the Old Testament—Elijah, a native of Tishbe, a town in the land of Gilead, which belonged to the tribe of Gad, on the east of the Jordan. As no mention is made of the lineage of that distinguished personage either in the Book of Kings or that of Chronicles, the rabbins, according to their usual custom, have devised the most ridiculous fables concerning him; but as these deserve no more attention than is due to other conjectures and surmises, it is unnecessary to introduce any abridgment of them here. Let it suffice to state, that Elijah's first appearance in public was such as to mark at once the zeal and intrepidity of the man, inasmuch as we find him suddenly upbraiding Ahab with his enormities, and denouncing divine vengeance against him. He stated to the king—probably at some idolatrous festival—and in the presence of his courtiers and a crowd of attending sycophants, that Jehovah was displeased with his conduct; and that in punishment of it there should not fall a drop of rain upon Israel, except at the prophet's bidding, for the space of three whole years. The prediction of Elijah was strictly and literally fulfilled, the earth refused to give her increase, the storehouses were exhausted, and there was a grievous famine. Cattle died for lack of grass to support them, and men, women, and children perished of hunger and thirst; but of the prophet himself God took care, by providing for him places of shelter.

For about a year Elijah dwelt in a cave beside the brook Cherith, where the ravens supplied him twice a-day with bread and flesh; and when at last the little stream dried up, he received injunctions to proceed to Zarephath, a town within the territories of Sidon, where God had appointed a widow woman to entertain him. He obeyed the command; and was met at the entrance of the place by his future hostess, of whom he requested a morsel of bread and a draught of water. The poor woman, instead of complying with his moderate petition, assured him that she was herself on the eve of starvation, for that her entire worldly substance consisted of a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise, "of which she intended that very day to make a cake that she and her son might eat it and die."

Elijah, however, persisted in pressing his demand : he encouraged her to comply with it, by assuring her that her store, small as it seemed to be, should not be exhausted ; and the woman, believing his asseveration, received him into her family, a measure of which she never found reason to repent. "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah ;" and upon that apparently scanty stock the family subsisted during the continuance of the famine. Nor did God's mercies to the widow end here. It chanced that her son fell sick and died ; upon which Elijah prayed to God in his favour, "and the soul of the child came again, and he revived."

In this obscure dwelling Elijah lived for about two years ; at the end of which time he set out, by God's command, to present himself before Ahab. While proceeding on his journey, he was met by Obadiah, a pious man, and the chief of the king's household, who had shown his respect for the true religion by sheltering no fewer than one hundred prophets from the rage of Jezebel, and was now, by his master's orders, searching the land for forage sufficient to support the royal stud. Him the prophet directed to inform the king that he desired to see him ; and though Obadiah was at first unwilling to undertake the commission, he executed it in the end to the satisfaction of all parties. Ahab and Elijah met ; when, after a little angry discussion, it was resolved between them to bring matters to a final trial, as to the claims possessed by Jehovah on the one part, and Baal on the other, to the honours of divine worship. The mode of determining this remarkable controversy was as follows : Elijah pledging himself to appear on the part of Jehovah, and Ahab stipulating to assemble the priests of Baal, it was agreed that each party should prepare a bullock for a burnt offering ; that they should lay the victims on their respective altars without applying fire ; and that the God who should send fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice should be acknowledged as alone worthy of adoration. Every thing was done in strict accordance with the terms of the agreement. The priests of Baal, many hundreds in number, built their altar, and laid their bullock in order ; but though they prayed till the time of the evening sacrifice, and cut themselves with knives and lancets, "there was neither voice, nor any answer, nor

any that regarded." Bitter and just was the raillery which Elijah heaped upon them. "Cry aloud," said he: "for Baal is a god; either he is talking, or he is engaged in the chase, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." But Baal heard them not; and Elijah knew well that he could not hear them. Widely different, however, was the case when the prophet addressed his prayer to God, having previously caused large quantities of water to be cast upon the offering, and poured into a ditch dug round the altar. His petition was scarcely ended, when there came a flame from heaven, which consumed the bullock to ashes, licking up the water as well upon the altar as in the trench; and the people, struck with the miracle, cried aloud with one voice, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." Elijah failed not to take due advantage of the effect produced upon the public mind. He caused the false prophets to be seized; and, carrying them down from the mountain, put them all to death by the margin of the brook Kishon. The issue of this extraordinary adventure was in the highest degree favourable to Israel. God, as if willing to temper judgment with mercy, caused rain to fall upon the earth, and the miseries to which the apostates had so long been subject were removed; but, unhappily, Jezebel's influence at court was too great to permit any permanent reformation to be wrought. She no sooner heard of the slaughter of her priests than she sent a message to Elijah, announcing that within four-and-twenty hours his life should pay the forfeit of theirs; and the prophet, justly dreading the execution of such a threat, from such a quarter, fled into the wilderness of Arabia Petræa.

Disgusted with the world, and hopeless of better days, Elijah threw himself down near a juniper-tree, where a soft sleep fell upon him, out of which he was awoken by the apparition of an angel standing over him with a supply of bread and water. Of this he was commanded to eat, because a long journey lay before him; and having done so, he needed no other refreshment during the space of forty days and forty nights. On the strength of that meal he wandered through the desert, till he arrived at Mount Horeb; memorable as the scene of the first delivery of the law to Moses; and now hardly less remarkable for the revelation of God's mode of acting which was granted to Elijah. The prophet had

withdrawn into a cave, where, in the bitterness of his heart, he began to remonstrate with the Deity, as if he, and he alone, had been left righteous in Israel; when God, to satisfy him of his mistake, as well as to convince him of the benevolence of the Divine nature, caused the following extraordinary events to occur. First of all, a furious hurricane swept by, rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces; then came an earthquake, which was succeeded by violent thunderings and lightnings; and last of all, was heard a still small voice, which assured Elijah that thousands still remained faithful to the true God, and directed the prophet in what manner to proceed. Elijah was greatly comforted by the communication, and girding up his loins, went forth again to mix in the assemblies of men.

In the mean while, Ahab had been engaged in desperate war with Ben-hadad, King of Syria, who, with a numerous army, laid siege to Samaria. Guilty as the Israelites were, the Syrians appear to have been still more so; and the guilt of their sovereign was such as to induce Jehovah at that time to refuse to him the victory. By the instructions of a prophet, Ahab caused a sortie to be made at a moment when the besiegers were engaged in revelry and feasting; and so spirited was the attack, that the assailants carried every thing before them. Ben-hadad was routed with immense slaughter, his camp plundered, and his very chariot taken; and he himself, with difficulty, escaped alone, and on horseback. At the end of a year, however, he again took the field, and a great battle was fought near Aphek, a fortified town of Libanus, and illustrious in after-times as the site of the temple of Venus the Aphacite. Here the Syrians were again defeated, and so completely broken were the forces of Ben-hadad that he was forced to sue for peace in the most abject manner. Ahab, with inexcusable weakness, yielded to his entreaties, stipulating only for the restoration of such places as Ben-hadad had taken and a few trifling advantages in trade to his own subjects; but no great while elapsed ere an intimation was given that his improvidence was equal to his guilt. God sent a prophet to him; probably the same who had previously foretold of his successes, to announce that "as he had let go out of his hand a man whom Jehovah had appointed to utter destruction, his life should go for the life of Ben-hadad, and his people for the Syrians."

It was at the close of this war that Elijah reappeared upon the stage of public life, for the purpose of executing the mission with which God had intrusted him. His first business was to consecrate Elisha, the son of Shaphat, a native of Abel-meholath, to the prophetic office. This he did by casting his mantle upon him as he was ploughing in the fields; and the novitiate, comprehending at once the purport of the sign, put his private affairs in order, and followed his new master. His next step was to seek out Ahab, that he might upbraid him with his iniquities, and announce to him the absolute ruin of his house. It happened that there was a certain inhabitant of Jezreel, by name Naboth, who possessed a vineyard contiguous to the royal palace, and who, on the king's desiring to purchase it for the sake of adding it to his gardens, refused to sell "the inheritance of his fathers." Ahab was exceedingly mortified at the circumstance; for, however tyrannical his disposition might be, there was still enough left of practical liberty in Israel to hinder him from taking forcible possession of the field. But his wife Jezebel, more fertile in wicked devices than he, very soon freed him from his uncomfortable dilemma. She gave orders in the king's name to the chief men of the place, to suborn false witnesses against Naboth; and the latter, being convicted upon their testimony of speaking disrespectfully of God and the king, was, in obedience to the Mosaic law, stoned to death. Ahab immediately possessed himself of the forfeited estate, and was in the act of giving directions as to its uses when Elijah suddenly appeared before him, and pronounced in no measured terms his sentence of condemnation. He was told, that as the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, so should they lick his; that his children should die by the sword, and be exposed without a decent funeral; and that Jezebel should be devoured by dogs, near the very walls of her palace at Jezreel.

For three years from this date there was peace between the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, towards the end of which period Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, arrived at Samaria, on a visit to Ahab. Unfortunately for the former prince, he came at a moment when Ahab was meditating an expedition against Ramoth-gilead, one of the cities which Ben-hadad had stipulated to give up, but which, in defiance of the treaty, he still retained. Being solicited by his relative to

accompany him in the campaign, he felt that it would be derogatory to his honour to refuse ; but he suggested the propriety, first of all, of consulting God as to the issue of the undertaking. This Ahab professed himself willing to do ; and he summoned before him four hundred false prophets, all of whom declared peremptorily that the confederate princes would return victorious. Nevertheless Jehoshaphat seemed dissatisfied, either because he was previously aware of the character of the speakers, or because there was something in their manner which caused him to distrust them ; and to gratify him, Micaiah, a celebrated seer, was called to the royal presence. At first Micaiah answered ironically, desiring Ahab to go up, by all means, and prosper : but on being urged in the name of Jehovah to speak the truth, he forewarned them that the death of one and the defeat of both would be the consequence of their expedition. He was cast into prison by Ahab, and military preparations went on ; but they ended as Micaiah had foretold. Ahab was slain by a chance arrow, his troops were put to the rout, and Jehoshaphat with difficulty escaped to his own capital. Nor did the prediction of Elijah touching Ahab fail of receiving its accomplishment : the chariot in which he received his wound being exposed at a pool near Samaria, the dogs came and licked his blood, where they had licked that of Naboth, when he lay dead in the fields by Jezebel's contrivance.

B. C. On the death of Ahab the crown of Israel passed
904. to Ahaziah, his eldest son, whose reign was at once short, impious, and inglorious : he walked in all the ways of the most profane of his predecessors ; and being humbled by the rebellion of the Moabites, his days were cut prematurely short by an accident. He was taking the air on a certain occasion, on the flat terrace of his house, when the parapet against which he leaned gave way and he fell into the courtyard below, grievously hurt. In this plight the infatuated idolater sent to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, as to his chance of recovery ; but Elijah met his messengers and desired them to return with an announcement that he should surely die. Desperate at this declaration, Ahaziah commanded an officer of his guard to lead out a party and seize the prophet. The troops endeavoured to execute their mission ; but Elijah prayed to God to deliver him, and there came fire from heaven, which devoured both

the officer and his followers. The same thing happened again, when a second party was sent against him; nor was it till the leader of the detachment addressed him in supplicating terms, that the prophet consented to appear before the king. He did so, repeating in person what he had already said to the royal messenger; and his declaration received, within a short time, its full accomplishment. Ahaziah died after a reign of two years, and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram.

Shortly after the accession of Jehoram to the throne, it pleased God to remove Elijah in an extraordinary manner out of the world. It is more than probable that he was forewarned of what was about to happen, for he proceeded to Beth-el and Jericho, at each of which there was a college of prophets, and with marked solemnity bid the students farewell. He would have done the same thing to Elisha on the banks of the Jordan, whither his faithful attendant followed him; but the latter would on no account consent to leave him, so long as he should continue an inhabitant of the earth. Upon this Elijah smote the river with his mantle, and the stream dividing, these two holy men passed over to the other side. They went on a little way into the wilderness, Elisha beseeching his master that in the event of his translation he would pray to God to grant him a double portion of the prophetic spirit; and Elijah was in the act of replying to his entreaty, when there suddenly appeared a chariot, as if of fire, with horses, advancing swiftly towards them. Elisha had time only to exclaim, "My father, my father; the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," when Elijah mounted the car, and in a whirlwind was removed out of sight. In testimony, however, that the prayer of his servant had been heard, the great prophet threw his mantle upon Elisha, as he gazed upwards; and the latter found, by the facility with which he was enabled to divide the Jordan on his return, that the spirit for which he had applied was granted to him. Elisha took the road to Jericho, upon which place he conferred a lasting obligation, by miraculously curing the brackishness of its water, and fertilizing the soil around it. From thence he proceeded to Beth-el, punishing certain scoffers with death as he went along; and having paid a visit likewise to the prophetic school at Carmel, he fixed his abode for a time in Samaria.

While these events were passing in Israel, Jehoshaphat was exerting himself to atone for his error in joining Ahab; and receiving fresh proofs that the God of his fathers was with him. He had just completed one of those circuits of which notice has been taken in the preceding chapter, when information reached him that a prodigious multitude of Moabites, Ammonites, and other tribes was about to invade his kingdom. Jehoshaphat caused a fast to be proclaimed, and crying to God for help, was assured by the mouth of an inspired Levite that his enemies would be destroyed without any loss to him. This was effected by dissensions breaking out among themselves, in the course of which they turned upon one another the arms which they had assumed against Judah; and Jehoshaphat found, on arriving at the place of their encampment, the bodies only of such as had fallen in the struggle. From these he collected a prodigious spoil, with which he returned in triumph to Jerusalem; and so great was the effect produced on all sides by the report of the occurrence, that Jehoshaphat enjoyed profound peace during the remainder of his reign. In one instance only misfortune overtook him: having improvidently joined Ahaziah, King of Israel, in a trading expedition, the same storm which destroyed one fleet destroyed the other; but with this exception, Jehoshaphat may be said to have run his race free from distresses either foreign or domestic. He died in the sixtieth year of his age, and twenty-fifth of his reign, and was succeeded by his eldest son Jehoram.

B. C. 904. It would appear that Jehoshaphat, imitating the example of David, had associated Jehoram with himself in the government for some years previous to his death, and to provide against the possibility of domestic broils, he appointed each of his other sons to the management of distinct offices and honours. Jehoram, however, no sooner sat alone in the regal chair than he gave a specimen of the sort of spirit by which he was likely to be actuated. He caused the whole of his brothers to be put to death; and apprehensive that their adherents might seek to avenge the murders, he included many of them also in the atrocious proscription. Then it was that he received from an unknown hand a letter which Elijah while yet upon earth had written; in which his bloody deeds were rebuked, and his apostasy from the worship of God foretold; while

the invariable consequences of such conduct, defeat and disgrace, were explicitly denounced against him. The issue was, that the Edomites threw off the yoke; Libnah, a city within his own dominions, declared itself independent; and the Philistines and Ammonites harassed him with continual inroads, in which the whole of his wives and children, with a single exception, perished. Finally, he was smitten with a fearful and disgusting complaint, which at the end of two years of excruciating suffering brought him to the grave. He swayed the sceptre independently for eight years, and transmitted it to Jehoahaz, the youngest and sole survivor of a numerous family of sons.

Some time previous to the occurrence of these events, while Jehoshaphat still reigned at Jerusalem, Jehoram, King of Israel, undertook a great expedition against Mesha, King of Moab, for the purpose of compelling him to renew the tribute which he had ceased to pay in the time of Jehoram's predecessor. In this undertaking Jehoram was joined by Jehoshaphat and his dependant the King of Edom; and the three sovereigns, uniting their powers, marched through the wilderness towards Moab. Whether they neglected to make adequate preparations for such an enterprise, or deviated from the regular track where wells were to be found, we possess no means to determine, but before they reached the point where the invasion of Moab was to commence, their sufferings became so excessive that all hope of escape from perishing of thirst ceased to be entertained. It was well for them that Elisha the prophet chanced to accompany their party, and that God looked with a favourable eye upon the design of their operations; for the former instructed them how to remedy the evil of which they complained, and the latter granted them a signal victory. By Elisha's directions they dug trenches in the sand, which on the following day were filled with water; while the Moabites, who had come out to oppose them, mistaking, through one of those optical delusions to which travellers in the desert are continually liable, the water for blood, took it for granted that the confederates had massacred one another under a paroxysm of insanity. They came on accordingly, expecting to meet with no resistance, in extreme confusion, and they suffered a severe and disastrous defeat; Kir-haraseth, their capital, being saved from

capture only in consequence of the horror excited in the breasts of the besiegers by the sacrifice of the king's eldest son upon the wall.

As soon as the siege was raised Elisha returned to Samaria, in and around which he found an opportunity of performing many wonderful actions. Among other things he caused a poor widow's scanty store of oil miraculously to increase, so that she was enabled to pay her husband's debts and redeem herself and her children from slavery. He rewarded the hospitality of a wealthy Shunamite, whose guest he was, by prevailing upon God to grant him a son, and when the child afterward died he restored him to life again. He rendered innocuous a mess of colloquintide pottage by mixing with it a little common meal; he multiplied twenty barley loaves so as to satisfy the hunger of a hundred persons; and caused a woodman's axe which had fallen into a pool to float upon the surface like a log of timber. But the most memorable of all was the cure of Naaman, the general-in-chief of the Syrian armies, who from his youth up had been afflicted with leprosy. That warrior, being commanded by Elisha to dip seven times in the Jordan, obeyed, though not without strong misgivings as to the efficacy of the proposed remedy. Yet such was the effect produced upon him by the accomplishment of his object that he hastened back to assure the prophet of his determination to worship from that hour Jehovah alone. He would have pressed upon Elisha at the same time several valuable presents, gold and silver, and changes of raiment, but of none of these things would the prophet accept. Gehazi, however, Elisha's servant, was not of a disposition so disinterested. He ran after the Syrian, pretended that Elisha had sent him, and begged certain articles in his master's name; for which, as well as for denying that he had done so, he met with a signal chastisement. The leprosy of which Naaman had been cured passed upon Gehazi, to whom and to his descendants it was doomed to adhere for ever.

The preceding pages contain the details of so many events which surpass the bounds of ordinary credibility, that any attempt to notice them one by one, or in order, would occupy a much wider space than our limits authorize us to devote to such a purpose. Of most of these, however, it may be fairly said, that no mode of reasoning of which we are

capable could place them in a fairer light than they already command; because their claim to be believed, as it rests entirely upon the place which they hold in Sacred Writ, can neither be strengthened nor weakened by common argumentation. Thus the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha, the translation of the former from earth to heaven, his endurance of a forty days' fast, and other wonderful things recorded of him, all these must be either absolutely received as truths, or else absolutely rejected; since there is no middle course by steering which any one of them can be brought down to the level of every-day probabilities. The rejection of these details, however, cannot be allowed unless the whole of the Sacred History be rejected at the same time; and that the latter course involves absurdities far more palpable than any of which the most credulous enthusiast is guilty, we have, in the preface to this work, taken occasion to show. Extraordinary as such things are, therefore, we are bound to give to them our most implicit assent, because they are recorded in a book of the authenticity and divine origin of which no doubt can exist. But though such be undeniably the case with reference to the miracles both of Elijah and Elisha, it cannot be denied that several things are related of the prophets themselves not at first sight perfectly in agreement with our notions of right and wrong.

The punishment of Gehazi, for example, and the apparent sanction given to idolatry in the person of Naaman, have been objected to; the one as excessive, the other as iniquitous; while the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, with its consequences, including the massacre of the idolatrous priests, and the flight of the prophet from Jezebel, are not without their apparent contradictions. The same thing may be said of the destruction by fire from heaven of two parties of soldiers in the execution of their duty; of the negligence of Elijah in failing to execute God's command to anoint Hazael, King of Syria, and Jehu, King of Israel; and, above all, of the tearing to pieces of two-and-forty children, in punishment of their conduct towards Elisha.

These, with other points of less moment, have been felt, even by the well-intentioned, to be intricate, and therefore deserve at least some examination here. With respect to

the punishment of Gehazi, it is sufficient to observe, that severe as it doubtless was, the enormity of the offence of which he had been guilty richly merited it. The attendant and disciple of Elisha ought to have stood as far above the temptation of avarice as his master; while, into a direct and deliberate falsehood no circumstances ought, on any account, to have led him. When the leprosy of Naaman, therefore, passed upon him, he suffered no more than an apostate teacher of righteousness deserved to suffer, by being rendered for ever incapable of exercising his holy calling, or associating familiarly with his brethren. In like manner, it is no hard task to discover that Elisha, in his parting benediction to Naaman, was very far from giving a sanction to the practice of idolatrous worship. The Syrian, after thanking the prophet, had said, "Thy servant shall henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." On which Elisha, making use of the valedictory phrase among his people, replied, "Go in peace." Surely there is no approbation of idolatry implied here, either directly or indirectly. Had Elisha, instead of thus expressing himself, called upon Naaman to become a convert to the Jewish religion, he would have gone beyond both the letter and spirit of the law under which he lived. There was no obligation imposed upon the professors of the Mosaic religion to aim at proselytizing other men. On the contrary, though permitted to receive converts, provided they offered themselves in sincerity, under certain restrictions as to genealogy and descent, the Israelites were from the first kept as much as possible apart from the rest of mankind, in order that the stock from which the Messiah descended might be distinct, and God's dealings with mankind liable to no misconception. But there was a decided obligation imposed upon God's prophets to oppose, by every means, the progress of idolatry; and to encourage, even among the gentiles, a belief in the unity and omnipresence of Jehovah. This effect was clearly wrought in the case of Naaman by his miraculous cure; and it was all that Elisha was justified in seeking. As to the speech of Naaman, touching his own

behaviour in the house of Rimmon, it may be taken in two senses, either of which will serve to justify both the speaker and the prophet. It may be understood, as many eminent Hebrew scholars interpret it, as referring to things past, in which case the Syrian Naaman is made to entreat God's pardon for having hitherto bowed his head before an idol ; or it may be read, as our version has it, without at all involving such consequences as have sometimes been supposed to arise out of it. Naaman, the natural-born subject and confidential servant of the King of Syria, was of course bound to discharge the several offices which his station imposed upon him ; and seeing that one of these required him to attend the king at his devotions, he was no more guilty in so doing than the Christian officer is now guilty whose military duties compel him to salute one of the idols of India as it passes him in procession. Elisha's valediction, therefore, cannot fairly be interpreted as giving the slightest connivance either to idolatry or hypocrisy.

The contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, again, with the results immediately following, appear to us to imply neither contradiction nor absurdity. No challenge could be more fair or reasonable than that of Elijah ; and if the prophets of Baal seem to have acted weakly in accepting it, knowing, as they could not fail to know, that their god possessed no power to vindicate his own honour, it is only necessary to believe, that in their circumstances no alternative was granted. For very shame they were compelled to take up the gauntlet ; inasmuch as their refusing so to do would have convinced both king and people that their pretensions to Divine influence were groundless.

In like manner, when the superiority of Jehovah over Baal had been demonstrated, and the former once more acknowledged as the God of Israel, Elijah's conduct in causing the false prophets to be put to death was strictly in accordance with the laws of the nation. The priests of Baal perished as rebels to Jehovah, the great King of Israel ; whose servant, in the administration of justice, the prophet then was.

As to the flight of the prophet himself to avoid the vengeance of Jezebel, notwithstanding so many displays of Divine power in his favour, that is a matter in no respect at variance with the general course of events. Unless

immediately directed to brave particular dangers, Elijah was covered by no supernatural shield from death or other calamities ; and his flight was a mere act of prudence, similar to that which our Lord's disciples were commanded by their Divine Master to perform.

The same reasoning which we have employed in vindication of Elijah's massacre of the priests of Baal may with equal propriety be advanced in explanation of the death, by fire, of the two military parties whom Ahaziah sent out to arrest the prophet.

In the ordinary governments of modern times military men are certainly not culpable for obeying the commands of their sovereign to arrest a man accused of a crime against the state, even when the accusation is false and groundless : but the government of Israel was no ordinary government ; Jehovah was the supreme civil magistrate of Israel as well as of Judah, and Ahaziah was but his viceroy, bound to administer the affairs of the kingdom by the law of Moses. Of this fact the officers who perished either were not or ought not to have been ignorant : they were therefore deliberately supporting the first minister of the state, for Ahaziah was nothing more, in rebellion against his sovereign, who had employed Elijah to perform the very things which had given such offence to their immediate master. That Elijah was the minister of God the miracles which he had repeatedly wrought left no room for doubt : the conduct of Ahaziah, as compared with the law of the land, left as little room to doubt that he was an ambitious and daring rebel ; and the very order which they resolutely endeavoured to fulfil was a palpable act of rebellion and high-treason. They suffered, therefore, for their crimes against the state, for executing the commands of a subject in open rebellion against his sovereign, and not for their personal offences against the man Elijah ; and they suffered by the immediate hand of the sovereign himself, who alone could send down fire from heaven to consume them.

For the apparent negligence of Elijah in obeying the injunction of God to anoint Hazael to the throne of Syria, and Jehu to that of Israel, a sufficient excuse will be found by him who considers the uses and nature of the prophetic office under the theocracy. To the constitution of ancient Israel, in church and state, a succession of prophets appears

to have been as necessary as a succession of clergy, authorized to preach and administer the sacraments, is necessary to the constitution of the Christian church. Our blessed Lord and Master, when he gave his last commission to the apostles, said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Now our Lord was perfectly aware, both that the apostles would not live "unto the end of the world," and that they could not preach the gospel, in their own persons, to all nations; but what they could not personally do, either has been done already, or will in due time be done, by their successors in office, in virtue of this commission originally given to them.

Precisely similar was the case with respect to Elijah and Elisha. Some powerful reason occurring to prevent him from personally anointing either Hazael or Jehu, these men were afterward anointed by Elisha, of whom Elijah had been explicitly told that he should be prophet in his room; in other words, succeed him in the prophetic office. It is worthy of remark, likewise, that as they were anointed without any new commission given to Elisha for the purpose, the old commission intrusted to Elijah was still in force; and though Jehu actually received his unction through the instrumentality of one of the sons of the prophets, the ceremony was equally valid as if it had been performed by the great prophet himself. There is, therefore, no ground whatever to accuse Elijah of having disobeyed or neglected a command given by Jehovah; inasmuch as the command applied to him, not as an individual man, but as a member of a body of which the succession was destined to be uninterrupted.

The destruction of the children who insulted Elisha on his way from Jericho to Beth-el is certainly a very singular fact; but there is nothing in it to startle or disturb the mind of the most timid believer. The town of Beth-el was infamous as one of the fountain-heads, so to speak, from which the apostacy of the Israelites issued, being contaminated by the presence of one of those golden calves of which Jeroboam had been the contriver; and it requires no violent stretch of imagination to believe, that its inhabitants were

sunk in the lowest rank of impure and grovelling idolatry. In proof of this we find them provoking and heaping insults upon one of Jehovah's prophets, as soon as he approached their town, and sending their very children after him, to continue the persecution as long as he was within hearing. To punish them for this, the prophet cursed them from God; not in anger, but acting as an instrument of Divine indignation, and God fulfilled the curse by causing forty-two of them to be torn in pieces by wild bears from the woods. It were folly to urge that in this case the guilty were permitted to escape a judgment, that it might fall only upon the comparatively innocent. If the people destroyed were, as the Hebrew words may denote, persons in early manhood, then is it fair to presume that they died for their own offences; if very young children, then were they taken away from corruption to come; while their parents were heavily punished in being bereaved of them.

Besides these, there are several minor statements to which objections have been taken; such as the account of Micaiah's conduct in compelling a neighbour to smite him previous to his obtaining admission to the king's presence; the means adopted by God to supply Elijah with bread and meat in the wilderness; and the perfect command which that prophet is represented to have exercised over the elements. We cannot enter at length into an examination of objections, the whole weight of which lies in the contrariety of certain facts to the common course of affairs, but we may observe that the proceeding of Micaiah, so far from being outrageous, strictly accorded with the prophetic practice of conveying instruction as well by signs as by words. In like manner there is nothing startling in the assertion that ravens brought to Elijah his daily food, inasmuch as the habits of all birds of prey lead them to carry off from points extremely remote morsels of flesh and other viands, to their young in their nests. With this fact the inhabitants of the Avennes are so well acquainted, that the shepherds there, in the neighbourhood of the nests of those wild birds, contrive to serve themselves with meat for their own tables, climbing up to their nests when the old ones fly from them in quest of more prey, and taking away from the young what the old had left there." Now without exactly supposing that the old prophet lay under the necessity of climbing

to the nests of these ravens for his portion, we shall put no insult upon Divine wisdom if we believe, that the birds were made to drop at the mouth of his cave those portions which they had intended to carry to their own broods. Nor is there the slightest difficulty in ascertaining from what quarters they were enabled to procure this supply. The whole kingdom of Israel was at this time overspread with heathen altars, upon which victims were continually offered up in groves and in high places; from these, ravens and other birds of prey could at all times abundantly pilfer. So also in reference to Elijah's command over the elements; it were little better than a waste of time to treat of that as ground of serious misgiving. Elijah possessed no power over the elements, which were then as they are now under the direction of God alone; he was the mere organ by which God spoke to men, in mercy or in wrath.

We have delayed thus long to take notice of Elijah's translation, because we feel that, with one or two exceptions, it is by far the most wonderful occurrence recorded even in the Bible. Of the fact itself no doubt can be entertained by him who professes belief in any other declaration of Scripture; for the narrative is given at too much length, and with too much minuteness and regularity to admit of a question being hazarded as to its reality. But no man can, we conceive, peruse the detail without experiencing a strong desire to ascertain whether the great prophet has been removed, and for what purpose God dealt with him so differently from his dealings with men in general. It is scarcely necessary to add, that for a solution of the first of these inquiries, we must be content to wait till the arrival of, that hour when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. To the second it requires but a moderate degree of erudition to discover an adequate solution.

There are but two characters in Sacred History of whom we read as having been excepted from the common law of mortality—Enoch, in the antediluvian world, and the prophet Elijah; both of them men of exemplary faith, piety, and virtue, and both eminent ministers of God in their respective generations. Exemplary as their piety was, however, we are not for a moment to suppose that the exception in question was granted to them as a reward of their virtue, inasmuch as no degree of virtue, however high, or however

perfect, can give to a created being a claim of right to immortality. Immortality has been from the first, as it continues to be at this day, the gift of God; originally suspended on man's observance of a positive command, but now freely bestowed upon all, through Jesus Christ, who to Enoch and Elijah, not less than to us, is the great cause of the resurrection of the body, and the uninterrupted life of the soul. It could not, therefore, be on their own account that the two illustrious individuals of whom we are speaking did not taste death; why then were they removed, otherwise than by natural decay, from the scene of their pious labours? The translation into heaven of Enoch and Elijah was to serve some great purpose in that astonishing scheme of redemption which was gradually unfolded from the fall of man, until it was completed by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and part at least of that purpose is now clearly seen. In the ages of Enoch and Elijah, the people around them were sunk into the lowest state of irreligion and vice. These two faithful ministers of God had done every thing in their power, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as well by their example as by their precepts, to bring them back to their duty. They had warned them of the judgments to be speedily executed upon them for all the ungodly deeds which they had ungodlily committed, and for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners had spoken against their Maker and his ministers; and Elijah had been himself the instrument of executing some of these judgments on Ahab, and on the prophets of Baal. But though piety and virtue were generally rewarded, and profaneness, idolatry, and vice punished even in this world, probably during the eras of both these prophets, but certainly in Israel during the era of Elijah; and though God was then not slack in any sense of the word concerning either his promises or his threatenings; all the promises and threatenings of the prophets, and all the judgments which had actually come on the people, were despised. In the days of Enoch, the obscure promise made to Adam of redemption from that death which he had brought on himself and his posterity appears to have been either not generally understood, or to have been generally forgotten.

In the age of Ahab and Elijah, great part of the Hebrew Scriptures was not written, and it may be reasonably doubted whether any part of those Scriptures was ever received as

canonical in the kingdom of Israel founded by Jeroboam but the five Books of Moses, and perhaps the Book of Joshua. These books seem not to have had their due influence in that kingdom at any time from the period of its revolt from the house of David till its final and complete destruction by the Assyrian monarch ; but it is very evident that during the idolatrous reigns of Ahab and his sons the law of Moses was totally disregarded, except by a comparatively very small number. It is likewise to be remembered, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were not spiritual but temporal ; and that those who knew not how death had come into the world, and were ignorant of the meaning of the promises made to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (promises which the worldly policy of the idolatrous kings and priests of Israel would not encourage the people to study), could hardly devise from their religion any steady conviction of a future state of retribution. It seems to have been, therefore, necessary at both these periods, to afford the people sensible proof that there is verily a reward for the righteous in a state different from the present ; and that proof was exhibited to them by the translation of Enoch and Elijah. "The translation of Enoch," says Bishop Law, "must have made the world about him sensible of the good providence of God, inspecting and rewarding his faithful servants ; and one would think it should have induced them to look up to a better state than the present, where all such might hope at length to see and enjoy their Maker. It was a lively and affecting instance of what man might have enjoyed had he kept his original innocence, as well as an earnest of the promised victory over the evil one ; and that mankind were not to be left entirely in their present state, but at some time or other to be restored to the favour of their Maker, and behold his presence in bliss and immortality." And surely the translation of Elijah ought to have produced an equally salutary effect upon the Israelites. It ought to have convinced their idolatrous sovereign, with his profane priests and false prophets, "that there is verily a reward for the righteous, and a God of gods that judgeth the earth ; and it ought to have drawn the attention of the people, as it probably did draw the attention of many of them, to the import of those promises which were made to their father Abraham, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed."

HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER IV.

Succession of Kings in Judah and Israel—Their Fortune—The Prophets raised up during this Era—The Nature of their Predictions—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4462.—B. C. 899.

No great while elapsed after the miraculous cure of Naamah ere hostilities were renewed between Ben-hadad, King of Syria, and Jehoram, King of Israel. At first these seem to have been carried on, on the part of the former, by predatory excursions merely, in the course of which the Syrians laid repeated ambuscades, with a view to seize the person of Jehoram; but Elisha, by forewarning the king of his danger, succeeded in preserving him, though he attracted towards himself in an especial degree the animosity of Ben-hadad. An attempt was accordingly made to surprise him at Dothan, of which the spirit of God gave him due notice; and the prophet, instead of falling into the hands of the Syrians, smote them with an imperfection of vision, which caused them to wander within the very gates of Samaria, where they were all made prisoners. No personal injury, however, was inflicted upon them. Jehoram, indeed, would have put them instantly to the sword, had not Elisha interfered to protect them; but at his suggestion they were supplied with food and drink, and sent back with perfect kindness to their own country.

Remarkable as in those barbarous times the above act of generosity was, it operated as no inducement upon Ben-hadad to lay aside his rancorous feelings towards Israel, when he entered that country soon afterward with an army too numerous and too complete to be resisted in the field by any force which Jehoram could bring against it. The latter accordingly shut himself up in Samaria, whither great multitudes of people, with Elisha among the rest, retreated, and the capital was subjected during many months to the miseries of a close siege. As the investment was strictly maintained, and no supplies were thrown in from the surrounding

districts, the inhabitants soon began to suffer the extremity of famine; insomuch that women were at last driven to the necessity of dressing their very children for food, and sharing the horrid repast with their neighbours. It is not to be wondered at that the distresses to which his capital was reduced should have affected Jehoram with profound sorrow. This was very powerfully excited when there came before him on a certain day a suppliant for justice, on the plea that her child had been eaten by herself and her neighbour, but that now her neighbour refused to fulfil her share in the contract, by concealing the infant which ought next to have been slaughtered. Jehoram was smitten with indescribable horror at this statement. He rent his clothes like an insane person, and in a paroxysm of despair, accusing Elisha as the cause of the public distress, he directed an attendant instantly to seek him out, and to cut off his head. The prophet sat at this time in his own house, surrounded by the elders of Samaria; and being shown by the spirit of God how matters were about to befall, he instructed them to detain the king's messenger at the door; because, said he, the king will repent of his rash order, and come in person for the purpose of contradicting it. Every thing fell out as the prophet had foretold. The messenger of death was arrested at the door of the house, and scarcely a minute elapsed ere Jehoram himself arrived; glad to find that Elisha was still alive, though desperate from the pressure of the calamity. In this spirit he began to threaten that he would no longer strive to live in obedience to God's laws, who exposed him and his people to such distresses; but the prophet cut him short by declaring, that if he would exercise his patience during four-and-twenty hours longer, the scarcity of which he now complained would be converted into abundance. How the king received this assurance we are not told; though one of his nobles who stood by pronounced its accomplishment to be impossible, unless indeed the Lord should rain corn from heaven; but to him Elisha condescended only to remark, that though he should see the prophecy fulfilled, he should himself reap no benefit from its fulfilment.

However regardless the Israelites might be of the moral laws of God, to the ceremonial part of the Levitical code they seem to have paid some attention; in accordance with

which all lepers among them were excluded from the common intercourse of society. It happened that there were four unfortunate persons afflicted by that malady, whom the Samaritans had thrust from the city, and who, as the besiegers gave them no safe-conduct, lived for some days under the walls. These persons, driven to despair by inanition, determined at all hazards to make their way into the Assyrian camp; justly concluding that it were better to perish at once by the sword, than to consume gradually by the pangs of hunger. With this view they set out from their lurking-place on the evening after Elisha's interview with Jehoram, and finding neither sentinels nor pickets to oppose their progress, proceeded on till they arrived, much to their own amazement, in the very heart of the Syrian lines. But if their surprise had been excited by the absence of vigilance at the outposts, it was excited a thousand times more keenly by the spectacle which met them here. The tents stood, as they had long done, and there were horses and cattle around them in abundance; but not a Syrian soldier, not a camp follower, not so much as a woman or a child could be seen. The lepers, as might be supposed, knew not how to account for the phenomenon; though they made haste to take advantage of it. They entered tent after tent, satisfied the cravings of appetite, and seizing on a number of golden vessels and other valuable effects, hid them under ground. This done they began to think of their countrymen, of whose sufferings they were well aware, and hurrying back to the city-gate, they repeated to the officer on duty how matters stood. The report was immediately conveyed to Jehoram, who, not without reason, was suspicious of treachery; but after sending out parties to reconnoitre in all directions, and ascertaining that the Assyrians were really gone, he permitted the inhabitants to rush out and convey the enemies' stores into Samaria. Then it was that Elisha's prediction concerning the incredulous noble received its accomplishment. That person, being placed on duty in the gateway to prevent confusion, saw, indeed, an abundant supply of provisions carried into the town, but himself derived from the measure no benefit; for the crowd pressing upon him, he fell, and before he could extricate himself from the throng he was trodden to death. It is scarcely necessary to add that the sudden retreat of the Syrians was the consequence

of a panic which God caused to fall upon them ; and their mistaking certain noises during the night for the march of heavy columns of troops, arriving, as their fears suggested, to relieve the place.

No further attempts to disturb the repose of Israel were made by Ben-hadad, whose vexation at the issue of this campaign threw him into a disease, concerning the termination of which he sent Hazael, one of the principal officers of his court, to inquire of Elisha. The prophet having assured that person that his master's malady was not of a deadly nature, yet that he should not recover, suddenly burst into tears ; and on Hazael urging him to state the causes of his distress, went on to open a prospect against the enticing nature of which the courtier's nature was not proof. Elisha told him that God had decreed him to fill the throne of Syria, as well as to be the instrument of inflicting a terrible punishment upon the rebellious Israelites ; upon which Hazael returned to his own country, to bring about an immediate fulfilment of the former prediction. This he did by barbarously murdering his sovereign, and as Ben-hadad left no son to succeed him, Hazael obtained the object of his sinful ambition without difficulty.

The city of Ramoth-gilead, which had been the cause of so many wars between the kings of Israel and Syria, still remained in possession of the latter, and now Jehoram, encouraged by the turn which events had lately taken, determined to make a vigorous effort to reduce it. Full of this design, he invested the place with a large army, but being wounded on a certain occasion, by an arrow from the wall, he was obliged to leave the command of the troops to Jehu, while he himself returned to Jezreel to be cured. Things were in this plight when Elisha, made aware that the moment had arrived when God's threat concerning the family of Ahab ought to be executed, gave orders to one of his attendants, called in the Sacred Volume the sons of the prophets, to proceed to the camp, and there to anoint Jehu king over Israel. This was done under circumstances of no ordinary interest, and the chief captains consenting to acknowledge him as their chief, Jehu lost no time in aiming at the sovereignty. Having taken ample precautions to prevent a rumour of the intended movement being conveyed to Jehoram, he put himself at the head of a select body of

chariots and horsemen, and marched rapidly, but in good order, towards the royal residence. His troop was seen by the watchman from the tower, and two separate messengers were despatched to inquire into the reason of his approach; but to these Jehu gave no other answer than a peremptory command to follow in his train. At last Jehoram full of the strongest doubts and misgivings, ordered his own chariot to be got ready, and prepared to ascertain, by personal communication, the cause of proceedings so extraordinary.

B. C. 895. It chanced that Ahaziah, King of Judah, was at this time on a visit to his kinsman King Jehoram, and being invited to accompany the latter on the present occasion he readily consented. The two kings accordingly set forward to meet Jehu; but they had scarcely arrived within reach of one another's voices, ere ample proof appeared that there was treachery abroad. They turned their horses and fled; but Jehu, drawing a bow with all his strength, pierced Jehoram through the heart with an arrow, while Ahaziah, being hotly pursued by his followers, received a wound of which he soon after died at Megiddo. This done, and the body of Jehoram being cast into Naboth's field, Jehu drove on, and entering Jezreel, passed under the palace, from an upper window of which Jezebel looked out. Highly painted and attired in royal robes, she endeavoured to stir up the inhabitants in her defence by reproaching Jehu with his treachery, and reminding him of the fate of Zimri; but Jehu no sooner desired such as favoured him to cast her down, than several of her own eunuchs obeyed. The miserable woman was thrown headlong from the tower, and was trodden to death by the horses. So far God's judgments received their completion in the death both of Ahab and Jezebel; and even in a more minute particular the Divine will was not left unfulfilled; for when Jehu sent out in the evening to bury the corpse of the queen, it was found that the dogs had literally devoured the whole of her carcass, except her scull and the palms of her hands.

B. C. 895. Having thus grasped at the crown of Israel, Jehu proceeded to secure his hold by executing upon the posterity of Ahab the sentence of extermination which had long gone out against them. That he might ascertain the disposition of the people of Samaria, however,

among whom the princes dwelt, he wrote to the leading men inviting them to set up the bravest of Jehoram's sons upon the seat of his father. The design of that letter was not concealed from the Samaritans. Instead of complying with its instructions they hastened to assure Jehu that they would acknowledge no sovereign besides himself, and on his requiring some proof of their allegiance, they sent him the heads of all the princes, to the amount of seventy. Jehu was well pleased with this. He immediately took the road to the capital, causing forty men the relatives of King Ahaziah whom he met by the way to be slain, and he entered the city, having in the chariot beside him an upright and highly-respected man, Jonadab, the son of Rechab. Jehu's next measure after eradicating every vestige of Ahab's lineage, was to massacre the priests of Baal, whom he collected together under the pretext of patronising their worship, and to destroy the temple of that idol. So far his conduct was agreeable to Jehovah; who, to mark the Divine approval of his zeal, conveyed to him a promise that the crown should remain in his family to the fourth generation; but unhappily he could not prevail upon himself to remove the golden calves which Jeroboam, as much from political as from superstitious motives, had set up. These continued to be worshipped throughout his reign, in consequence of which Hazael, the King of Syria, was permitted grievously to distress him, especially in the country beyond Jordan, where the tribes of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben were located. Thus with mixed prosperity and adversity, as with an imperfect and incomplete obedience to the Divine laws, he swayed the sceptre during twenty-eight years; and dying, left it considerably diminished in value to his son Jehoahaz.

B. C. While these things were going on in Israel, the death of Ahaziah had excited no little commotion, 895.

as well as led to many and great changes in Judah. Athaliah, the mother of the deceased prince, who was the daughter of Ahab, King of Israel, no sooner ascertained that the throne was vacant, than she determined to seize and retain it for herself; and to facilitate the usurpation, she caused all the children whom her husband Jehoram had by another wife to be put to death. From this general massacre only one infant, the son of the late King Ahaziah,

was preserved : his aunt, Jehoshabeath, who was married to the high-priest, Jehoiada, concealed him with his nurse in an apartment of the temple ; where for six years he dwelt in comparative obscurity, while Athaliah held the reins of government, which she had so iniquitously assumed.

B. C. As soon as the young prince attained to his seventh
889. year, Jehoiada, who seems to have been an upright and pious man, determined to restore him to his rights, and to rid the nation of a cruel and irreligious tyrant. He easily persuaded the Levites in attendance in the temple to join in the plot, and these, watching their opportunity, slew Athaliah, and proclaimed Jehoash king. So long as Jehoiada lived, the people of Judah had ample cause to rejoice in the change which was thus effected. Jehoash, acting by the high-priest's instructions, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord ; but the aged counsellor no sooner paid the debt of nature than he abandoned the ways of uprightness. Nay, to such a height was his ingratitude carried, that because Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada, presumed to remonstrate with him, he hired assassins, who murdered him in the temple ; thus repaying the benefits which he had received from his greatest benefactors by shedding the blood of their son. But neither Jehoash nor his people, who, according to custom, followed the example of the court, escaped punishment. Hazael, the King of Syria, invaded Judah, laid its fields waste, and committed havoc in all directions, and compelled the weak Jehoash to purchase a temporary truce to his capital, by delivering up all the rich vessels which his ancestors had devoted to the service of God. Nor did the matter end here : within the space of a single season the invasion was renewed, with increased loss both of life and property ; Jerusalem itself being, on this occasion, entered by a foreign force, and Jehoash treated with great indignity. Finally, he was smitten with a complication of loathsome diseases, and two of his servants conspired against him, and murdered him in his bed. He reigned forty years, was buried in the city of David, though not in the royal sepulchre, and was succeeded by his son Amaziah.

In the mean while the affairs of Israel were
B. C. conducted, first, with memorable iniquity and mis-
867-850. fortune, by Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu ; and after

him with better success, because with less flagrant corruption, by his son, Jehoash. The former of these princes, after suffering defeat after defeat from the Syrians, till his strength was reduced to the lowest ebb, died, an object of general abhorrence, in the seventeenth year of his reign. The latter gradually brought matters back to their original condition, and overthrew the invaders in many rencounters. During his reign the following striking circumstances occurred: Elisha the prophet became sick, and Jehoash, by whom he seems to have been held in high respect, paid to him a visit of condolence. While the prince was lamenting over him, "as the chariot of Israel, and the horseman thereof," the prophet, desirous of giving him an insight into the fortune which awaited him, adopted the very common practice of conveying instruction by signs. For this purpose he directed him to shoot an arrow towards the east, explaining at the same time that it was the arrow of deliverance from Syria; and then commanded him to strike the floor with another; which Jehoash did three times. The prophet, however, was indignant that he held his hand thus quickly. "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times," said he, "then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." All this was in perfect agreement with the usual manner of the prophets; and to the strictest letter Elisha's declarations eventually came to pass; Jehoash defeated the Syrians in three great battles, retook most of the towns which had fallen, and passed the latter years of a reign, which lasted sixteen in all, in peace. He was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II. Previous to these events, however, Elisha died, and was buried in a cave, or recess, among the rocks, near Samaria. It happened that a funeral party, while proceeding to some other burying-ground with the corpse of a dead man, was disturbed, near the prophet's grave, by a band of Moabite plunderers. That they might the more easily escape from the marauders, the bearers cast the body into Elisha's tomb, and the corpse no sooner touched the prophet's bones than it revived. This is one of the most striking testimonies to the truth of a prophetic mission which stands on record, even in the Bible.

It has been stated, that Jehoash, after a reign of
B. C. 849. forty years, was murdered by two of his servants,
and that he was succeeded on the throne of Judah,

by his son, Amaziah. Like his immediate predecessor, this prince exhibited, at the commencement of his career, a strong disposition to serve God, as well as a more than ordinary gentleness and placability of temper towards his subjects. Though he caused his father's murderers to be put to death, he would on no account consent to involve their children in the execution; and if he appeared somewhat lax in sanctioning the practice of offering sacrifices in the high places, he set his face directly against the worship of any but the one true God. The consequence was, that for a season every thing prospered in his hands, and he soon collected together a larger and better-equipped army than any king of Judah had of late been able to bring into the field.

His first military efforts were directed against the Edomites, who, in the reign of Jehoram, had cast off the yoke of Judah, and as he somewhat distrusted his own power to subdue them, he hired a hundred thousand soldiers of Israel as allies. With this arrangement, however, God expressed himself displeased, and Amaziah in consequence dismissed the mercenaries, who showed their indignation by plundering the country through which they passed, and putting several thousands of the inhabitants to death. But Amaziah, for the present at least, took no notice of the outrage. He pursued his expedition into Edom, defeated the armies of that nation in a pitched battle, slew ten thousand prisoners, by casting them headlong from the rock on which Selah, the capital of Arabia Petrea, stood, and returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

It is not very easy to account for the infatuation which could urge a man thus favoured by Jehovah to profess himself a worshipper of the idols of the very tribes whom by the favour of the God of Israel he had overthrown. Such, however, was the case with Amaziah, and to so extravagant a pitch was his apostacy carried, that God sent a prophet to assure him that unless he speedily abandoned the follies into which he had run his destruction was inevitable. But Amaziah paid no heed to the warning voice which would have preserved him from ruin. On the contrary, he added to the sum of his iniquities an insane determination to attempt the reconquest of Israel, in revenge for the conduct of the Israelite contingent, when dismissed from his army; and that his renown might be the greater, he despatched an

ambassador to Jehoash with a formal challenge to meet him manfully in the field. The challenge, though at first treated with contempt, was not eventually declined; Amaziah was defeated and made prisoner, heavy contribution was levied upon his kingdom; the temple was again plundered, and a large portion of the rampart of Jerusalem itself was thrown down. Amaziah reigned in all twenty-nine years, and he perished at last, after he had forfeited the respect of his subjects, by the hands of assassins, in Lachish, a town of Philistia.

The prince of whom we have last spoken had B. C. occupied the throne of Judah fourteen years when 834. Jeroboam II., the son of Jehoash, succeeded to the crown of Israel. Though a corrupt and impious prince, God nevertheless permitted him to wage many successful wars with the heathen nations around; insomuch, that he restored Israel to something like the power and dignity which it possessed under David and Solomon. His reign, moreover, was long as well as prosperous, extending over a space of one-and-forty years; and he commanded the respect, if he failed in securing the esteem, both of his own subjects and of foreigners. Like other great warriors, however, Jeroboam was more attentive to the glory than to the prosperity of his empire. He made no arrangements as to the succession, nor appointed any regency to conduct affairs at home while he was engaged in distant conquests; and as he perished during one of these excursions, a species of interregnum, or rather a complete state of anarchy, ensued for two-and-twenty years after his death. It was at this period that Jonah, the prophet, who flourished as well during the reign of Jeroboam as in the anarchy, was sent by God on his memorable expedition to Nineveh. That city, the capital of the great Assyrian empire, had fallen to the lowest depth of vice and profaneness; and the purport of Jonah's mission was to warn both the king and the people that a tremendous judgment hung, in consequence, over them. Jonah, however, who appears to have entertained very imperfect notions of the power and omnipresence of the Deity, chose, for some reason not assigned, to be displeased with the nature of the duty imposed on him; and, hoping to escape from the influence of the God of Israel by abandoning the country of which he was the

guardian, took shipping at Joppa, with the design of escaping to Tarsus, of Cilicia.

The ship put to sea, but had proceeded but a little way on its voyage, when a violent storm arose, which so alarmed the crew that they came immediately to the conclusion that some horrible criminal was among them. Lots were accordingly cast, for the purpose of determining against whom the anger of heaven was directed, and Jonah being marked as the cause of their present trouble, was, at his own suggestion, thrown into the sea. But God had prepared an extraordinary instrument for the preservation of his life. A huge fish, supposed to be of the shark species, swallowed him, and after an interval of one whole day, and portions of two others, again disgorged him alive on the beach, not far from the harbour where he had embarked. Jonah, taught by this miracle that God's power was resistless, proceeded, as he had been directed, to Nineveh, and denounced against it the sentence of punishment which Jehovah put into his mouth; but even now the wayward seer exhibited ample proofs of his disinclination to curb his own humours, however opposed these might be to the Divine will. He had threatened Nineveh, that at the end of forty days it should be destroyed; and such was the effect produced by his preaching, that the inhabitants "repented in sackcloth and ashes;" while God, in the multitude of his mercies, was pleased, in consequence of their humiliation, to remit the penalty incurred. Jonah was highly indignant at this: he even presumed to remonstrate with the Almighty on the injury done to his character as a prophet; and retiring from the city, pitched a tent in the fields, under which he sat down in no very enviable frame of mind.

He was thus circumstanced, when the sun, rising high in the heavens, grievously annoyed him with its rays. Peevish and ill-tempered at all moments, Jonah began again to repine; but God causing a gourd to spring up during the night, he found himself next day, much to his satisfaction, sheltered from the excessive heat. By-and-by, however, a worm penetrating into the stem of the gourd, it withered away almost as rapidly as it had grown, and the prophet again murmured against Providence, and desired to die. Then it was that God took him seriously to task for the folly and impropriety of his conduct. "Thou hast had

pity on the gourd," said the Divine voice, "for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?" The reproof appears to have produced its desired effect even upon Jonah, and he acknowledged that God's mercy was more to be adored than any other of his divine attributes.

While these things were going on in Israel and B. C. elsewhere, the government of Judah passed from 820. Amaziah into the hands of an aristocracy, who acted as guardians to his son Uzziah, the latter having attained only to his fifth year, at the period of his father's murder.

Uzziah's pupilage continued about eleven years; B. C. for in the sixteenth year of his age he was solemnly 809. proclaimed king; and he reigned in all rather more than half a century, with credit to himself and benefit to his country. The earlier portion of his reign in particular was marked by great piety and extraordinary success. He defeated the Philistines in numerous battles, dismantled their cities, and built forts in their country to keep in check every rebellious movement; while his operations against the Arabs, as well on the borders of Egypt as in the Desert, were all conducted with singular good fortune. Uzziah reduced the Ammonites to a state of vassalage; he repaired the walls of Jerusalem, strengthened them with towers, and supplied them with implements for throwing stones and darts; and, not less attentive to the arts of peace than to those of war, he caused the fields of Judah to be cultivated till the land became as a smiling garden.

All this while he had for a counsellor one Zechariah, a man of exemplary piety and honour, who seems to have possessed over him unbounded influence; but Zechariah no sooner returned into dust, than the king ceased to behave with the judgment which had hitherto characterized him. In the pride of his heart he attempted to invade the priestly office, by offering incense with his own hand within the sanctuary; for which he was smitten with a leprosy, and became from that hour an outcast from society. During the remainder of his days the active duties of the crown were discharged by his son Jotham, and at his death he was

buried, indeed, in the royal field ; but, like a thing unclean, in a grave apart from those of his predecessors.

It is worthy of remark, that throughout the whole period of which the principal events have been detailed in this chapter, neither the kingdom of Israel nor that of Judah was without its succession of prophets. Of these the most illustrious, because they have left written testimonies to their veracity behind them, were Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Isaiah. Hosea seems to have exercised his divine calling for a space of seventy years or upwards, flourishing in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel. He inveighed against the corruptions of the ten tribes, foretold their captivity, and predicted that Judah should retain her independence for some time after, though her inhabitants also should in the end be transported beyond the Euphrates. Joel, the son of Pethuel, again, spoke of an enemy's army, under the figure of a destructive swarm of locusts, which should come upon Judea ; and invited the people to repentance, with promises of pardon. He pointed plainly to the Messiah as a teacher of righteousness, and to the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh ; and he related in terms of remarkable perspicuity the glorious things which God should do for his church in the latter ages. With respect to Amos, he likewise prophesied of the progress of the gospel both among Jews and gentiles, though the main design of his declarations was to mark the judgments which should come both upon the enemies of Israel and upon Israel herself, in punishment of her transgressions. Obadiah, again, speaks in more cheering terms. He points to the successes which his countrymen should obtain over the Edomites and others of their oppressors ; foretels their reformation, and restoration from captivity, and the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah with great salvation : while of Isaiah it may be truly said, that there is no subject, either of faith or morals, of which he fails to take at least some notice. The beauty and distinctness of his allusions to the Messiah have been universally admitted and universally admired ; while his promises of the return from Babylon, and of the prosperity which should follow, could not fail to cheer the spirits of the Jews, in the darkest hour of their history. Such were

the men whom God from time to time raised up, for the purpose of preventing his people from becoming contaminated by the example of the nations around them ; while by daily adding to their stock of knowledge, he prepared them for that full burst of light which was to shed upon them and upon all mankind by the gospel of his Son.

There are but a few circumstances recorded in the preceding pages of which we consider it necessary to take notice as calculated in any degree to shake the faith of the honest and sincere inquirer. In this number we are by no means disposed to class any of the miracles, whether of preservation or judgment, of which we read ; inasmuch as these rest their claim to be believed exclusively upon the character of the book in the pages of which they are to be found. Even the sojourn of Jonah in the belly of the fish, extraordinary as the fact doubtless is, will excite neither misgivings nor uneasiness in the mind of him whom previous reasoning has taught to feel that the Bible is the word of God ; while no explanation which we could give would suffice to silence the objections of those who either cannot or will not satisfy themselves of God's power to controvert the ordinary laws of nature. It may be worth while, however, to show, that in this, as in all similar cases, "the knot was worthy of a God to loose it ;" in other words, that low as Jonah himself may have stood on the scale of morality, he was the fittest instrument to be used on this occasion, while his miraculous preservation in so peculiar a manner was well calculated to serve a great end, and doubtless did serve it.

In the days of Jonah the kingdom of Israel was deeply infected with idolatry of the worst species. Jonah himself was a native of *Gath-hepher*, which the best geographers place in the province afterward called Galilee of the Nations ; where the inhabitants were a mixed people, all more or less attached to the gods of the countries from which they originally came ; and that even he entertained very incorrect notions of the attributes of the God of Israel the history of his proceedings affords ample testimony. It will be remembered that in Israel the law had long ceased to be much read or much regarded. The Israelites, therefore, if they continued to esteem Jehovah as a being possessed of greater power than the gods of other nations,

looked upon the limits of their own country as bounding the theatre where his power might legitimately be exercised ; and Jonah clearly seems to have made his attempt to cross the sea under the persuasion that he might thus escape from Jehovah's presence. The town of Joppa, or, as it is now called, Jaffa, was then famous for the worship of Venus-piscis ; a deity of whom mention is made under the titles of Atargates and Derceto, sometimes as a male, sometimes as a female. It was the same superstition which prevailed among the Assyrians and Babylonians, and which continues to prevail at this day among the Hindoos ; whose idol is represented as an enormous fish, having a human head under its own head, and human feet extending beyond the tail. By taking refuge here, Jonah doubtless desired to put himself under the protection of the sea-monster, and he entered the ship as thoroughly imbued with the spirit of heathenism as any member of its benighted crew.

When the storm arose, the seamen, as was usual in like cases, called upon their god Derceto for aid ; and seeing that none was afforded, they adopted a practice, of the prevalence of which in ancient times every scholar is aware, by casting lots in order to discover the individual on whom a curse was imposed. The lot fell upon Jonah, and on their demanding of him who he was, and what the nature of his worship, he replied, that he was a Hebrew, and of course a worshipper of the Lord Jehovah.—“Then were they exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this ?” Why hast thou attempted to flee from the presence of thine own God, and put thyself under the protection of the god of Joppa ? for it is perfectly evident that Jehovah has raised the storm, and neither Derceto, nor any other deity whom we have invoked, possesses power enough to allay it. So far the superiority of the God of Israel over their gods seemed to be established, and the fact was further demonstrated, when Jonah, at his own desire, being cast into the sea, a perfect calm succeeded. “Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and offered sacrifices unto the Lord, and made vows.” “These vows,” says Mr. Bryant, “we may imagine to have been, that they would for the future reverence the true God, whom the wind and seas obeyed, and not put their trust in their national deities, whose inferiority had been so manifest, and in whom there

was no help." If such were the case (and it could not well be otherwise), here was one important object, the conversion of the idolatrous mariners and other passengers on board the ship, gained by this tremendous miracle. "But," continues the author from whom we have just quoted, "before they could have offered any sacrifice, though the fact is mentioned afterward, the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. This, we may presume, was done immediately when the prophet was cast overboard into the sea, and consequently the mariners in the ship must, to their astonishment, have seen the process. They must have beheld a real leviathan of the deep acting as an instrument of heaven, against which their imaginary and emblematical deity had no power. Neither Dagon, nor Atargates, nor Oannes of Babylon, nor Vishnou of Hindostan, nor Ceto of Joppa, could prevent one of the community and a votary from being entombed in the body of this monster."

Had the process indeed stopped here, the devouring of Jonah by the great fish in the presence of the mariners might have had a tendency to confirm them in their base worship of Derceto rather than to convert them to the worship of the God of Israel. If they possessed any portion of that perverse obstinacy which characterizes modern unbelievers in general, they would undoubtedly have concluded, from witnessing so tremendous a scene, and the calm by which it was instantly succeeded, that their deity was the great power which Jonah had offended; that she had therefore stirred up a tempest in the ocean to avenge herself on this occasional worshipper of Jehovah; and that, as soon as she had accomplished that object, she took compassion on her faithful adherents: but the conclusion of the scene rendered it impossible to make seriously such reflections as these. "As the mariners," to use the words of Bryant, "had laboured for a while to gain the land, but were prevented, we may suppose that after the storm was over they returned in their shattered vessel to their haven at Joppa, and there gave a full account of this wonderful event." The prophet, too, after he had been, for an appointed season, consigned to a deathlike darkness in the body of the fish, was brought to light, and freed from his prison; and though Scripture is silent on that head, there

seems strong reason for the opinion that it was on the coast near Joppa that "the cetus was stranded;" and, consequently, that "in its last efforts and agonies, within view of the temple of Derceto, it disgorged the apostate prophet." This is, indeed, rendered highly probable by the fact that no mention is made of any other voyage undertaken by Jonah, which, had he been conveyed to any port beyond seas, would have been necessary in order to reach Nineveh. Now, if any of the inhabitants of that district had been induced by the narrative of the mariners to infer that the storm had been raised and made to cease by the power of their god or goddess, such an inference must have been completely done away by this last event, which exhibited the emblem of the divinity they adored as the mere instrument employed by the God of Israel to carry his designs into effect. The prophet, who had deserted the God of his fathers and placed himself under the protection of the gods of Joppa, they had seen swallowed up by the greatest of these gods; and though they might at first suppose that this was done to punish him for his occasionally worshipping the God of Israel, they could think so no longer after seeing the monster disgorge him uninjured and perish itself. They saw him likewise set out on his mission to Nineveh, to preach against the enormous wickedness of the people, and against the worship of all such gods as Derceto; and if by this they were not convinced that Jehovah was the only God, it is impossible that they could longer doubt of his superiority over their gods, or of his being indeed "God of gods, and Lord of lords." But it was not on the people of Joppa alone that these extraordinary occurrences were calculated to produce a salutary effect. When Jonah reached Nineveh, whither the fame of his escape could not fail to be carried before, he doubtless found all classes of men eager to see and to converse with him, and ready to receive as true whatever statements might be advanced by one thus palpably taken under the guardianship of a higher power. That the case really was so, indeed, the readiness with which the Ninevites abandoned their idols and humbled themselves before Jehovah proves; inasmuch as no ordinary causes can account for the great success of the prophet's preaching. Thus we see that the perverseness of Jonah, and even his propensity to worship the

gods of the heathen, made him a much better instrument than Isaiah, or any other pious and virtuous prophet could have been in the hands of the true God, to give a check to the progress of idolatry and vice both at Nineveh and at Joppa. This miracle, therefore, had the greatest moral fitness possible for diffusing the knowledge of the true God through the world; the very purpose for which not only all such miracles appear to have been wrought, but for which the children of Israel were kept distinct from other nations.

We are not ignorant that the history of Jonah's preservation has been objected to, not so much on any moral grounds, as because of the supposed impossibility of his passing through the oesophagus of a whale; or, if he did pass through it, of his continuing to live for any length of time in the whale's belly. We have only one reply to offer to this objection, which is, that the whole transaction from beginning to end was miraculous, and therefore that the laws which regulate the common course of affairs could exert over it no influence whatever. It is true that the word rendered in our version *whale* may be shown to signify a shark or any other fish of great size, and so far the objection which rests upon the difficulty of squeezing the man entire into the animal's stomach falls to the ground; but we cannot conceal from ourselves that this solitary fact gets rid but of one out of many improbabilities, and hence we experience no inclination to bring it prominently into notice. Of whatever species the fish might be, nothing short of a direct and powerful interference on God's part could have continued in life a human being, pent up for three days and three nights in a dungeon where no atmospheric air could by possibility reach him. We are therefore willing to confess, that all the attempts which have been made to bring this miracle to the level of remote probability (using that term in its ordinary sense) are ridiculous, inasmuch as it could be wrought by the finger of God alone suspending for a season the common laws of nature. But it no more follows that the event did not occur because it is miraculous, than that Moses did not divide the Red Sea, or Joshua prolong the daylight, when such wonderful deeds were necessary to serve particular purposes.

Besides the history of Jonah, there is literally nothing told in this chapter which seems to demand from us either

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explanation or defence. Jehu was indeed a bad man, but he was not on that account less an instrument of wrath in the hand of the Most High ; and if many of his actions be accounted inconsistent, we need only refer to the history of the species in order to discover a thousand parallel cases. In like manner Elisha's behaviour to Hazael, though sometimes pronounced artful and iniquitous, will be found on closer examination susceptible of a very simple explanation. It is absurd to contend that the prophet, by foretelling the accession of Hazael to the throne of Syria, tempted him to commit the murder which rendered that throne vacant. No more was done in this instance than had been done in the instance of David ; and had Hazael possessed the integrity and patience of the poet king, without a doubt the issue would have been the same. It is very possible that Elisha's prediction might have blown up into a flame the sparks of ambition which already smouldered in the Syrian's bosom. Such is always the case when an aspiring man happens to converse with another from whom he learns, that the eyes of the world are fixed upon him with reference to some public measure ; but for that consequence Elisha was surely not answerable, far less the spirit of God, by whose dictation Elisha spoke. Upon Hazael's head, and upon it alone, therefore, rests the guilt of Ben-hadad's murder, for which there was no necessity in order to accomplish a decree passed by the Creator of all things.

CHAPTER V:

Connexion of Profane History—The Egyptian and Assyrian Annals—Capture of Samaria, and Destruction of the Kingdom of Israel—Succession of Princes in Judah.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4356.—B. C. 793.

BEFORE proceeding further with the history which we have undertaken to record, it will be necessary, for the sake of connexion, to give a concise outline of the rise and progress of certain great powers with which soon after the era

of the preceding chapter the children of Israel came into collision. Up to this moment their intercourse, as well in war as in peace, can hardly be said to have extended far beyond the bounds of the petty tribes by which Canaan is immediately surrounded. Thus the contests carried on in the times of the Judges were all with the seven nations which held Palestine Proper, or the lands which begirt it chiefly to the east, south, and west. Even Saul and David carried arms only against the Philistines, Edomites, and Moabites: while, with the exception of Rehoboam's brief contest with Shishak, King of Egypt, and an occasional expedition against the Arabians, their immediate successors had no other enemies. The Syrians indeed appear upon the stage, especially during the reigns of the later princes; but of them it may with truth be asserted that they were a power of very secondary note, inasmuch as Syria included under it a variety of petty kingdoms, all of them independent one of the other. It is true that during the reigns of Ben-hadad and Hazael one of these, the kingdom of Damascus, rose to considerable eminence; nevertheless, even it bore no comparison in point of magnitude or importance to Egypt or Assyria, the mighty empires in whose fortunes that of the Israelites now came to be involved.

There seems no reason to doubt that when the children of Noah began to multiply upon the face of the earth, and to send out colonies in search of new settlements, Egypt was one of the first districts which received a supply of human inhabitants. From the name which that country anciently bore, as well as from the concurring testimony of numerous traditions, it would appear that Mizraim, the second son of Ham, laid the foundations of the Egyptian empire, by conducting a band of followers into Thebais, or Upper Egypt, and building what may be termed the rudiments of the famous city of Thebes. Within the limits of that province the settlers appear to have dwelt for some time under the simplest of all forms of government, the patriarchal; gradually extending themselves into the Delta as it became fertile and habitable, and as their own increasing numbers rendered the measure necessary.

In this state things remained for more than two centuries, when Menes, a man of great vigour of mind and excessive ambition, arose, who first introduced the royal form

of government, and himself usurped the supreme power. To him a variety of useful works are attributed, such as the turning of the Nile into a new channel, the erection of the city of Memphis, and the foundation of the magnificent temple of Hephaistos, dedicated to the Supreme Being ; while the division of the land into three lots, and the appropriation of these to the crown, the priesthood, and the soldiery, is equally said to have taken place by his order, at the suggestion of his prime minister Thoth, or Hermes. Menes was the head of a dynasty which lasted in all two hundred and fifty-three years, and ended in the person of Timaus, or Concharis, 2195 years before Christ.

It was during the period of Timaus's government that the irruption of the Auritæ, Hyksos, or Shepherds, took place, a horde concerning whose origin and previous circumstances a variety of opinions prevail. Manetho, as quoted by Josephus, speaks of them as a tribe of Arabians ; while our own Bryant takes it for granted they were a colony of Cushites, expelled from Babylon on the occurrence of a revolution in that state. The Hindoos likewise lay claim to the honour of producing them ; but as we possess no means of deciding with accuracy which account is correct, it were needless to waste time by pursuing the subject further. Let it suffice to state, that from whatever quarter of the globe they may have sprung, they made themselves complete masters of Egypt, the sovereignty of which they retained for two hundred and sixty years ; during which time several of the largest pyramids were built, and many other toilsome works performed. At last the original inhabitants, no longer able to endure the tyranny of their foreign masters, rose upon them, and, after a desperate struggle, drove them out, under Assis, the sixth sovereign of the dynasty, about thirty years previous to the arrival of Joseph in the country, and before Christ 1899. It is to be observed, that the throne of Egypt was filled by a sovereign of the shepherd race, by name Apachnes, when Abraham visited that country B. C. 2077 ; and that the exiles, spreading themselves along the coast of the Mediterranean to the westward of Canaan, became the people of whom mention is repeatedly made in Scripture as the Philistines.

A new dynasty of native Egyptians began in the year B. C. 1899, with one Alisphragmuthosis, by whom Joseph

was appointed regent, and the district of Goshen assigned to his kindred as a dwelling-place. It continued throughout two hundred and fifty years, and came to an end in the person of that sovereign who was drowned while pursuing the Israelites through the Red Sea. The latter event occurred, as we need scarcely remind the reader, 1648 years before the birth of Christ.*

A fourth dynasty now arose with Amosis, or Thummosis, which, extending through seventeen reigns, endured three hundred and forty years, and ended B. C. 1308. The last of the line was Moeris, illustrious as the reputed excavator of the lake of that name, as well as for the erection of certain pyramids in the midst of it, of which no fragments now remain ; but who, in all probability, did nothing more than open a communication between the river and a prodigious natural basin, which thenceforth became a lake. He was succeeded by his son Sesostriis, one of the greatest warriors and most illustrious monarchs in history, who, on account of his high renown, has been held to be the root of the fifth dynasty by which the Egyptian throne was filled.

It would carry us far beyond the limits of our legitimate province were we to attempt any description of the exploits of Sesostriis or his successor further than as these bear, or seem to bear, upon Sacred History. Of Sesostriis himself it is sufficient to relate, that during nine years he was constantly engaged in foreign wars, and that he carried his victorious arms into many and distant lands, several of which he effectually subdued. Among others, the Assyrians themselves appear to have owned him as their master ; at least both they and the Medes contributed to swell his triumph on his return. This is the prince of whom mention is made in Herodotus as erecting pillars in the several countries which he conquered ; each of them inscribed with a figure emblematical of the courage or effeminacy of the subjugated states, and who caused numerous pyramids and temples to be built by the captives whom he brought in myriads into his own country.

* The most illustrious person in this dynasty was Queen Nitocris, whose mode of avenging the murder of her brother and predecessor Herodotus thus describes : She invited a number of the guilty nobles to an entertainment, in a large subterranean apartment which she had constructed ; and letting in the waters of the river upon them by a private canal, drowned them all. She afterward destroyed herself.—B. ii.

Sesostris was succeeded by Rampses, or Pheron, a weak and indolent prince, under whom the Assyrians not only regained their liberty, but acquired the sovereignty over the whole of Upper Asia ; or, to speak more correctly, recovered that ascendancy which, previous to the successes of Sesostris, they had maintained. He resigned the throne, after a reign of sixty-one years, to Cetes, Proteus, or Rameses, during whose administration the rape of Helen took place ; and who, though he detained the fugitive princess with her treasure for the purpose of restoring them to Menelaus, could not prevent the siege and capture of Troy. His immediate successors were Amenophis IV., improperly mentioned by Manetho as the sovereign who expelled the Israelites ; Rampsinites, of whom Herodotus tells certain strange stories ;* Cheops, to whom the Egyptian priests attributed the building of the first pyramid, with numerous acts of tyranny ; and Cephres, or Shishak, whom God sent against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, as has been stated at large in this work. The last of the race was Mycerinus, or Cherinus, who came to the throne B. C. 976, and died B. C. 966.

The preceding dynasty held the reins of government during three hundred and forty-two years ; but by whom it was immediately followed we are unable to say. There is a chasm here in Egyptian history of one hundred and fifty years ; nor is it till the year B. C. 815, that we can again take up the thread of royal succession in the person of Bocchoris or Asychis. Of this prince we are informed by Diodorus, that he excelled all his predecessors in wisdom and prudence ; while his simplicity of life and abhorrence of luxury and ostentation, were long proverbial in the east. He was succeeded by Anysis, whom at the end of two years Sabacon Soa, or So, an Ethiopian, drove from the throne, and compelled to seek concealment in the marshes, he himself occupying the regal seat for fifty years. We shall have occasion to mention the name of this prince again when we treat of the war between Hoshea, King of Israel, and the Assyrian emperor, Shalmaneser ; but in the mean time it may be proper to state, that he voluntarily resigned

* That he was extremely rich ; prostituted his daughter for the purpose of discovering by whom he was robbed (book ii. 121) ; and that he descended alive into the infernal regions, and played at dice with Ceres

the crown at the close of the period above mentioned, and retired in peace into his own country. Upon this Anysis again wore it for six years, when he died, and was succeeded by Sebecon or Sethos, under whom the invasion of Egypt by Sennacherib took place. He reigned in all forty years, and died B. C. 673.

Such was the close of what may be termed the sixth dynasty, with which, as it brings us down considerably lower than the date of the transactions recorded in the last chapter, we shall for the present end our outline of Egyptian history; while we run over with still greater brevity the annals of the Assyrian empire, as far as they can be traced amid numerous fables and contradictions.

Of the foundation of Babylon by Nimrod, and the erection of the Chaldean empire, so early as the year B. C. 2554, the ablest chronologists who have treated on the subject seem to be pretty well agreed; but whether Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, owes its rise to the "mighty hunter," or to a colonist from Chaldea in ages long posterior, is by no means so satisfactorily determined. Our own view of the question has already been given; that Nimrod was himself the founder of Nineveh, which he named after his son Ninus, and to which he gave the second rank in his empire; and in spite of the able reasoning of a late writer,* backed as it is by the authority of Ctesias and Justin, we see no reason to change it. The two empires, therefore, the Chaldean and the Assyrian, seem to us to have been originally the same. They were both obtained by Nimrod by violence and bloodshed, in whose family for seven generations the supreme power rested, Babylon being all that while the common capital.

In those early ages it is well known that the component parts of kingdoms hung loosely together; and that a multitude of patriarchal chiefs exercised unlimited authority over their own tribes; though they themselves owned an allegiance, sometimes more nominal than real, to the common sovereign. The consequence was, that revolutions were at once easily excited and not unfrequently successful; and that dynasties succeeded one another in many instances with remarkable celerity. The Chaldean race, for example,

* Dr. Russell, of Leith.

filled the throne not more than 225 years, at the end of which period it was supplanted by a family of Arabs, who in their turn reigned 215 years, sending the crown from father to son, throughout six generations. By adding these successions together we arrive at the year B. C. 2114, up to which date Nineveh remained in comparative obscurity, and Assyria continued to be a tributary state, dependent, like other provinces, upon Chaldea.

It was about this time that a governor of Assyria, to whom Ctesias has given the name of Ninus, instigated the people of his province to rebel; and, after an arduous struggle, succeeded in expelling from the throne the Arab dynasty which filled it. Like other conquerors, Ninus was not slow in occupying the vacant musnud; but as he transferred the seat of power from Babylon to Nineveh, the empire, instead of retaining its ancient title, is henceforth recognised as the empire of the Assyrians. It was of great extent, embracing, in some degree, the whole of the provinces immediately to the eastward of the Euphrates, and asserting its influence over many others not, in strict propriety of speech, incorporated with it.

Were we to follow the example set us by the chronologer whom we have just quoted, we should transcribe into these pages a long list of thirty-six princes, extending without interruption from Ninus to Thonus Concolerus, who mounted the throne B. C. 841. This, however, we are not disposed to do, partly because the authenticity of the catalogue may in some respects be questioned, and partly because, were the case otherwise, there is little either of amusement or instruction to be found in perusing any catalogue, however correct. It may serve our purpose to state, that throughout the whole of this extended period, the empire of Assyria subsisted in power, though it was kept by an especial influence of Divine Providence from taking a prominent part in the affairs of the nations westward of the Euphrates; in order that the promise made to the Israelites in the wilderness, touching the bounds of their future sovereignty, might be fulfilled. As the Israelites, however, became more and more corrupt, God, as he had threatened to do by Moses and the prophets, "stirred up the spirit of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings against them," by whom they were in due time subjected to those punishments which the great lawgiver had denounced.

Up to the reign of Thonus Concolerus (or as Ctesias calls him, Sardanapalus), the line of the Assyrian succession seems to have been strictly observed: but at his decease a partial change took place, and a new family, supposed to be of Median extraction, ascended the throne. This occurrence is not, however, to be confounded with the revolt of the Medes and Babylonians, and the division of the Assyrian empire into three parts. The latter events befell more than a century later, though under a prince who is likewise called Sardanapalus. It was merely one of those revolutions which have been of frequent recurrence in all ancient empires, and which happened, though unquestionably at greater intervals, in Assyria as well as elsewhere. The revolution in question took place B. C. 821, and the name of the prince who conducted it was Abaris, during whose reign the prophet Jonas was commissioned by God to preach repentance to the corrupt inhabitants of Nineveh. Of the successors of Abaris we shall have frequent occasion to speak as we pursue the thread of Sacred History; to which, not without considerable satisfaction to ourselves, we now return.

It has been stated that on the death of Jeroboam, B. C. 793. the second king of Israel, there ensued in that country a species of anarchy or interregnum, which continued throughout the space of two-and-twenty years, and was productive of infinite mischief to the people. Wearied out at length by intestine divisions, the Israelites came to the determination of placing Zachariah, the son of their deceased sovereign, on the throne; and B. C. 771. he accordingly ascended it in the thirtieth year of Uzziah, King of Judah. He was the fourth and last king of the line of Jehu; and his reign, which was remarkable for wickedness and folly, occupied not more than six months. At the end of that period he was murdered by one Shallum, who usurped the sovereignty, but he in his turn was defeated and slain by Menahem, general of the king's guard, and the crown passed, as a matter of course, to the head of the conqueror.

It was during the administration of this person, B. C. 770. whose cruelties seem to have been horrible, that an army of Assyrians, under Pul, the immediate successor of Abaris, entered for the first time the territories

of Israel. As Menahem found himself totally unequal to meet the invader in the field, he purchased the withdrawing of the Assyrian forces, and a recognition of his own title, by a present of a thousand talents of silver, a sum of money which he raised by arbitrary contributions imposed upon the leading men in his dominions. By this means he contrived to secure himself on the throne, and dying, after a reign of ten years, left it to his son Pekahiah. But Pekahiah's occupation of the royal chair was not of long continuance. He had not held it two full years when he was murdered by Pekah, his general-in-chief, who seized upon the crown and wore it, though in the midst of troubles, for twenty years.

In the mean while the affairs of Judah were wisely
 B. C. and happily administered by Jotham, the son and
 757. for a while the coadjutor of Uzziah; a prince whose piety secured for him the favour of God, and the respect of his neighbours. He rebuilt the temple wherever it was in a dilapidated state, and repaired the royal palace, besides throwing up numerous fortifications for the defence of his kingdom; and applied himself with extreme diligence to the very arduous task of reforming the habits and manners of his people. Jotham was not engaged in many wars, but whenever he took the field he was successful. The Moabites and Ammonites he once more reduced to the state of tributaries, and he made ample preparations to meet a storm which threatened him on the side of Israel and Syria. But before the latter burst Jotham slept with his fathers, after a prosperous and commendable reign of sixteen years.

Widely different in every respect was the prince
 B. C. who succeeded him; and who, in spite of the ex
 741. ample which his father had set, ran into all the excesses and crimes of which the most impious of his predecessors had been guilty. "He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire to Moloch, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." Nor did any great while elapse ere he reaped the fruits of his transgressions. Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin, King of Damascus, confederating their forces together, invaded Judea, which they laid waste in all directions; putting to death all who pretended to oppose their progress, and

making the peaceable inhabitants captives. Of the latter, multitudes were carried to Damascus, where they were reduced to a state of slavery, while 200,000 would have shared the same fate at Samaria but for the interference of a prophet, who prevailed on Pekah to dismiss them. It was during this invasion that Isaiah gave utterance to the memorable prophecy touching the conception of a pure virgin and the birth of Immanuel, in order to convince Ahaz that, wicked as he was, God would not, in his day, permit the house of David to be utterly exterminated.

The troops of Israel and Syria were scarcely withdrawn, when Ahaz had his kingdom threatened by a fresh invasion of Philistines and Edomites. In this predicament he implored the assistance of Tiglath-pileser, who on the death of Pul had succeeded to the crown of Assyria; and whose younger brother, Nabonassar, governed with almost royal authority in Babylon. That monarch, however, though he promised ample aid, made no movement in Ahaz's favour; but invading Syria of Damascus, laid siege to the capital, and after a protracted defence took it. Its inhabitants he transferred according to eastern custom to Kir, in Upper Media, and then turned his victorious arms against Pekah, King of Israel. From him he wrested all the territories on the east of Jordan, as well as the province of Galilee and other places, and he removed the tribes which inhabited them, namely the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites, into Halah and Habor, on the river Gozen. Ahaz began now to perceive, that by inviting a monarch so powerful as the Assyrian to interfere in the affairs of Palestine, he had only raised up against himself an enemy more formidable than any which had hitherto threatened him; and he made haste, by stripping the temple of its riches, and presenting them to Tiglath-pileser, to deprecate his wrath. He likewise visited him in person at Damascus; where he beheld an idolatrous altar so gratifying to his taste that he ordered one precisely similar to be substituted in the temple of Jerusalem for that set up by Solomon. But Ahaz's crimes and life were equally drawing to an end. In the midst of a course of idolatry, which became daily more and more flagrant, he was smitten with a deadly disease, and expired in the thirty-sixth year of his age, and the sixteenth of his reign.

B. C. While these things were going on in Judah, the fate of Israel was rapidly approaching to a crisis, 728.

which the enormous and daily increasing guilt both of the people and sovereigns rendered inevitable. Pekah, the murderer of Pekahiah, was assassinated by Hoshea, the son of Elah, who, after an interregnum of ten years, ascended the throne; and found himself almost immediately engaged in an unequal contest with Shalmaneser, the son of Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria. The latter soon overran Israel, entered Samaria in triumph, and reduced the country to the rank of a tributary province; a state of things under which it continued to linger for rather more than three years, till Hoshea, weary of dependence, entered into a treaty with So, King of Egypt, and raised once more the standard of the ten tribes. It was a fatal movement this for the remnant of Israel: Shalmaneser, assembling an immense army, advanced with rapid strides upon Samaria, whither Hoshea, with his dispirited troops, retreated; and after a siege which lasted three whole years, made himself master of it and of Hoshea's person. Such was the end of the kingdom of Israel, after it had subsisted rather more than 256 years; for the descendants of Jacob were in large numbers removed from their homes, and never, as a nation, returned. On the contrary, they were scattered through certain districts in the north of Assyria, and in the cities of the Medes, and their places were filled up by emigrants from all lands, the ancestors of the race referred to in the New Testament as the Samaritans.

B. C. Samaria fell, and Israel ceased to be an independent state in the year 719, B. C. In the mean while 725.

Ahaz, the impious King of Judah, had been succeeded by his son Hezekiah, a prince in every respect worthy to sit upon the throne of David. He no sooner grasped the reins of government than he applied himself sedulously to the task of reforming the many abuses which the wickedness of his predecessors had introduced. Ahaz's idolatrous altar he withdrew from the temple, and restored the original, that of Solomon, to its place; and after cleansing the building itself from the pollutions which had been introduced into it, he threw open its gates for public worship. He then summoned the priests and Levites together, ordered them to sanctify themselves according to

the directions given in the law, and appointed them to offer proper sacrifices in atonement for the sins both of king and people. Not satisfied with this, he determined, after a consultation with the leading men in the nation, to renew the solemn festivals which had, unhappily, fallen into disuse; and the feast of the passover was in consequence kept with a splendour unknown since the days of Solomon. Finally, he caused every graven image or other symbol of idolatry to be destroyed throughout his dominions, involving in the common ruin Moses's brazen serpent, which the people had latterly been induced to worship; and putting the priests in fresh courses, he restored to them and to the Levites the tithes and first-fruits, which his less worthy predecessors had appropriated. In a word, Hezekiah exhibited, in all his conduct, an extraordinary zeal for the true religion, and he was rewarded by numerous and striking interpositions of Divine power in his favour.

While the Assyrians were employed in the subjugation of Samaria, Hezekiah carried his arms with signal success against the hereditary enemies of Judea, the Philistines. From these he not only recovered all the conquests which they had made during the late war with Pekah and Rezin, but pursuing his conquests further dispossessed them of almost all their own territories, except Gaza and Gath. Emboldened by so much good fortune, and confident in the assistance of Jehovah, he next refused to continue the tribute to the crown of Assyria, which his father had undertaken to pay; and he was saved from at least the immediate consequence of his courage, by the necessity under which Shalmaneser lay of reducing certain provinces of Syria and Phœnicia, which had revolted from him. Nor was the Assyrian monarch ever in a condition to accomplish his threat of hurling Hezekiah from the throne, inasmuch as he died while carrying on the siege of Tyre, without having brought that project to a successful termination.

About this time Hezekiah was affected with a severe distemper; and the prophet Isaiah came to him with a command from God "to set his house in order, because he would surely die." This was a mortifying announcement to an upright prince, who, entertaining no correct notions of a future state of happiness, centred all his hopes and

wishes in earthly prosperity; and he accordingly prayed with fervour and bitter entreaty, that Jehovah would not carry the sentence of death into immediate execution. God was pleased to listen to the cry of his faithful vicegerent, and again sent to him the prophet Isaiah, who dressed the ulcer with which he was afflicted with a plaster of figs, and restored him to health; having previously caused the shadow to go back upon the sundial ten full degrees, in testimony that his simple remedy would prove effectual.

The pious king was scarcely recovered from his distemper, when Sennacherib, who had succeeded his father, Shalmaneser, on the throne of Assyria, advanced with a prodigious army against him. Incapable of meeting in the field a force so overwhelming, Hezekiah contented himself with throwing garrisons into his fortified towns; putting Jerusalem in a state of defence, and providing it with an ample supply of military stores, at the same time that he despatched ambassadors to solicit the alliance of So, King of Egypt, between whom and the Assyrian monarch numerous grounds of hostility existed. The latter arrangement, however, was highly disapproved by the prophet, both as it implied a want of confidence in the protection of Jehovah and as a measure fraught with no good consequences: and of the truth of the latter declaration no great time elapsed ere Hezekiah received the most convincing testimony. The King of Egypt made no movement whatever to support him; and Hezekiah, finding that his towns were one after another falling, was compelled to implore the clemency of Sennacherib, and to promise a strict submission to such terms as he should condescend to impose. But the demands of Sennacherib were at once exceedingly grievous and made with no honest intent. He caused Hezekiah to pay a subsidy of three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold; to raise which the good king was compelled, not only to exhaust his treasure, but to strip from the very doors of the temple the gold with which they were adorned; and then, after a short truce, which he himself spent in conducting an expedition into Ethiopia, he renewed his hostile intentions towards Judea. For the second time Sennacherib invested Lachish, a town of some importance in South Judah, and sent from thence three of his principal officers to demand the surrender of Jerusalem itself.

It is not to be wondered at if Hezekiah felt both alarmed and distressed, when the insolent and blasphemous messages of which they were bearers were delivered to him by the Assyrian generals. Hoping, however, that even now God would not desert him, he carried Sennacherib's letter into the temple, and spreading it before the altar, besought Jehovah to vindicate his own honour, by humbling the pride of him who thus dared to insult him. Hezekiah was not deceived in his expectations: the prophet Isaiah came to him with a declaration that Sennacherib should not be permitted under any circumstances to accomplish his threats; and the promise was strictly fulfilled on two separate occasions. In the first instance, Sennacherib, while employed in the siege of Libnah, was alarmed by a rumour that his own dominions had been invaded by a band of Cuthite Arabians, to oppose whose progress he found it necessary to march back with all haste; and though he overthrew them in a great battle, his second attempt upon Jerusalem proved equally abortive, and more disastrous in its issue. He arrived, indeed, in the vicinity of the city, took up his position with great parade, and once more defied by his heralds, "the living God;" but that very night the blast of the simoom came upon his camp, and upwards of eighty thousand of his bravest soldiers perished. Sennacherib himself did not long survive this defeat: he fled in dismay to Nineveh, where he was soon afterward murdered in the temple of the god Nis-roch, by two of his sons, who made their escape into Armenia, and left the succession open to Esar-haddon, their younger brother.

For some time previous to this catastrophe, the colossal empire of Assyria had been gradually, but surely, tottering to its fall. When in the year 747 B. C., Pul assigned to his younger son Nabonassar a species of independent sovereignty at Babylon, he sowed the seeds of disunion, which each successive reign contributed to mature, and which nothing except the vigour and personal activity of such princes as Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib had hitherto kept from bringing forth the fruit of open rebellion. No sooner, however, had the last-named sovereign paid the debt of nature, than the event so long impending, occurred. Media and Babylonia both threw off the yoke, the example

was speedily followed by other provinces, and for a space of twenty-nine years the empire was involved in all the miseries of civil war. It was at the commencement of this period, or in the year 710 B. C., that Merodach-baladan, the new king of Babylon, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah, to solicit his alliance against the common enemy; an application which flattered the vanity of the Jewish monarch not a little, and induced him to take a step, of which he found abundant reason afterward to repent. With a degree of incaution not to be excused, he conducted the Babylonish emissaries through his numerous storehouses, pointing out to them the wealth of his people and the great resources of his government. But God was highly displeased that Hezekiah should so far forget what was due to Him, as the supreme ruler of Israel. He commanded the prophet to inform him that the day would shortly come when all the riches of which he boasted should be carried as spoil into Babylon; and Hezekiah, conscious that the reproof was just received it as became him, with humility and patience.

While Assyria was thus torn with intestine quarrels, Judea enjoyed a profound peace, of which Hezekiah made good use, by devoting a large share of his attention to the internal affairs of the kingdom. He caused the art of agriculture to be industriously cultivated, at the same time that he strengthened the walls by which his capital was surrounded; he added greatly to the comfort of its garrison and inhabitants, by the construction of a new aqueduct; and he died at last, in the twenty-ninth year of his reign, to the great regret of his faithful subjects. He was buried with extraordinary pomp among the descendants of David, and left the crown to his son Manasseh, at that time a youth of twelve years of age.

B. C. It was unfortunate for the young prince that the
696. care of his person and the charge of his education

devolved upon bad men, who took every means of imbuing his mind with an unfavourable impression of the reforms introduced by his father. The consequence was, that he soon ran into an excess of crime and folly, worshipping idols, restoring the high places of Baal, and polluting the sanctuary itself, by the substitution of a graven image for the ark; while the furnaces of Moloch were again

fed with the flesh of innocent children, and every impure and hideous abomination practised. His cruelties, moreover, were as extravagant as the objects which they were intended to effect were sinful. He persecuted such of his subjects as refused to follow the impious example which he set, and treated with contempt and outrage all the prophets who presumed to convey to him messages of reproof from Jehovah. But the guilt of Manasseh was not permitted to pass unpunished.

It has been stated that the provinces of Media, Babylon, Armenia, and some others, taking advantage of the confusion occasioned by the murder of Sennacherib, threw off their allegiance to the Assyrian monarch, and declared themselves independent. The new king, Esar-haddon, no sooner found himself firmly seated on the throne, than he took vigorous measures to quell the rebellion, and in the third year of his reign, 680 B. C., recovered possession of Babylon. This done, he turned his attention towards Phœnicia, Palestina, Egypt, and Ethiopia, which for three years he grievously devastated; and these being entirely subdued, he advanced with a resistless army upon Jerusalem. Manasseh ventured, with more courage than prudence, to meet this veteran host in the field; but he was defeated with great slaughter; and he himself, being seized in a thicket where he sought to conceal himself, was carried captive to Babylon, and cast into prison. The gloom of his dungeon stirred up in him a feeling of sincere repentance and deep contrition; he prayed earnestly to God for forgiveness of the crimes which he had committed, and Jehovah, in the multitude of his mercies, softened the heart of Esar-haddon, who restored him to liberty, and reinstated him in his kingdom. Manasseh's repentance was not like that of too many wicked men, the offspring of mere suffering, which perishes with the cause that produced it. The whole of his mature life was spent in seeking to do away the abominations which in his youth he had introduced; and God blessed him in consequence with a long and prosperous reign of fifty-five years. Yet Manasseh was not honoured at his death with a royal burial. He was laid privately and unostentatiously in a grave constructed in one of the gardens attached to the palace, and was succeeded in the throne by his son Amon.

B. C. The reign of Amon was at once exceedingly wicked, and exceedingly short. At the expiration of 641. two years, his domestics, entering into a conspiracy, murdered him in his own house; and he was buried, as his father had been, without pomp or ceremony. He left the crown to his son Josiah, one of the most excellent of all the sovereigns that ever wore it.

B. C. Josiah was a child of eight years old when the 639. above event occurred; but as his guardians chanced to be religious and just men, his education was conducted very differently from that of his grandfather Manasseh. The consequence was, that he scarcely arrived at maturity when he began to exhibit more than common zeal for the honour and service of Jehovah. He made a personal progress through the kingdom, overthrowing, wherever he found them, the altars erected to false gods; he cut down the groves, brake in pieces the molten and graven images, and causing the tombs of the idolatrous priests to be opened, he burned their bones with fire and scattered the ashes over the ruins of the altars beside which they, when living, had officiated. He deprived of the sacerdotal office every priest who had offered sacrifices, even to Jehovah, elsewhere besides in the temple; he broke down certain houses in which impurities had been perpetrated too hideous to be named: in a word, he utterly extirpated every monument of idolatry throughout the whole compass of Judea. Nor did he confine himself strictly within the bounds of his own dominions. Extending his progress into the land where the ten tribes formerly dwelt, he carried on there, as well as elsewhere, a war of extermination against idolatry; and performed at Beth-el all that had been foretold while Jeroboam swayed the sceptre of that kingdom.

Having purged the recovered provinces of many gross abominations which defiled them, Josiah's next efforts were directed to the restoration, in all its purity, of divine worship at Jerusalem. For this purpose he gave orders that the temple should be thoroughly repaired, and directed Hilkiah, the high-priest, minutely to inspect it, in order that nothing might be left incomplete. While Hilkiah was thus employed, he accidentally discovered an authentic copy of the "book of the law of the Lord given by Moses," and carrying it without delay to the king, laid it before him.

The king commanded him to read it aloud ; but when Hilkiah arrived at those passages which denounce God's anger against idolaters, and speak of the punishments which should come both upon the people and their sovereign in the event of their transgressing his commandments, Josiah's horror and dismay rose to the highest pitch. He rent his clothes, and hastily desired those about him to inquire of the Lord by what means his anger might be appeased, and the guilt of Israel pardoned. But God's decree for the temporary destruction of Jerusalem was irrevocably past. Though it was stated through Hildah, the prophetess, that in consideration of Josiah's piety and humility he himself should not witness the event, it was nevertheless distinctly declared, that the judgments threatened in the book of the law would, ere many years elapsed, fall upon the corrupt descendants of Jacob.

Josiah continued to the last moment of his life to walk in the way which the Lord commanded. He celebrated the feasts of his church with memorable splendour, renewed his circuits from time to time through the land, and caused copies of the law to be every where distributed ; inasmuch that, during the thirty-one years to which his reign was extended, Judea enjoyed rest from all troubles, external as well as internal ; but at the close of that period he unhappily chose to mix himself up in a quarrel between the kings of Egypt and Assyria, and perished in battle. To the first of these princes, who solicited a safe-conduct for his army through a district belonging to Judea, he gave a direct refusal ; and marching out to assert the independence of his crown, he was defeated and mortally wounded near Megiddo, a city in the half-tribe of Manasseh, not far from the Mediterranean coast. Thus fell Josiah, perhaps the most pious of all the princes who derived their origin from David, amid the lamentations of his people, by whom he was deservedly beloved. He was carried to Jerusalem, where he died, and was interred in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

We are not aware that in the preceding chapter any details have been given to which the most fastidious inquirer after truth would be justified in refusing his assent. With the exception, indeed, of the circumstances attending Hesekiah's recovery, and the behaviour of Josiah on hearing

the book of the law read, this portion of Sacred History records few events at variance with the ordinary course of things; inasmuch as the prosperity or adversity both of Judah and Israel is uniformly represented as proceeding from the wisdom or folly of their rulers. When the helm of government was directed by a skilful hand, their success in war, as well as in peace, was the consequence; as often as a weak and impious monarch filled the throne, results diametrically opposite ensued. But in the account which the sacred chronicle gives both of Hezekiah and Josiah, there doubtless are one or two matters open to misapprehension; though even here the inconsistencies will be found, on examination, to be far more in appearance than in reality.

It has been stated more than once, that the behaviour of Hezekiah, when informed by the prophet that his hours were numbered, was not exactly such as might have been expected from a pious, an upright, and a brave man. Instead of bending the head in submission to the Divine will, he "turned himself to the wall, and chattered like a crane or a swallow," imploring in the most abject manner a prolongation of life; as if the mere prolongation of life were alone worthy of consideration from a man avowedly upon his deathbed. Now, though this remark, as well as the censure implied in it, be perfectly just with reference to us, it cannot with any propriety be applied to the case of Hezekiah. Hezekiah lived under the law, not under the gospel; his notions of a future state were, by his own showing, exceedingly inaccurate; and hence his disinclination to pass out of life into death, however violent, was, at least, not unnatural. But there were other reasons why at that particular moment he should feel extremely reluctant to die, besides his suspicion "that the grave cannot praise God, nor such as go down into the pit hope for his truth."

Hezekiah when he received God's sentence from the lips of the prophet was only nine-and-thirty years of age, and being without a son to succeed him, might be regarded as the last of David's line. To die under such circumstances could not fail deeply to affect a prince proud doubtless of his lineage, and anxious to perpetuate it, not only through the common feeling of royal vanity, but because of the hope which had been held out to his ancestors, that from them the Messiah should be descended. This alone were

sufficient to account for Hezekiah's deep sorrow ; but when it is further remembered, that his dominions were threatened at the time with an invasion from Assyria, and that a patriot chief could not but contemplate with dismay the devastation which would probably follow his demise, all ground of surprise on our part will be removed. Hezekiah did no more than would be done at such a moment by any sovereign who had the good of his people more at heart than his own.

With respect, again, to the conduct of Isaiah when it pleased God to grant the king's petition—his curing the royal patient by so simple a remedy as the application of a plaster of figs, and his causing the shadow to return upon the dial ten degrees—we see nothing in all this contradictory to any known truth, or standing in need either of explanation or defence. The cure of Hezekiah was clearly miraculous, and it was demonstrated to be so by the mode in which it was effected ; while the turning back of the shadow was one of those operations which it pleased God from time to time to perform, as occasion required them. We are not, however, called upon to believe with the Jewish rabbins, that the earth was really rolled back upon its axis, and the day thus miraculously lengthened ; the phenomenon could be, and probably was, produced by a mere alteration of the density of some portion of the atmosphere over the dial of Ahaz.

In like manner the proceeding of Josiah on the discovery of the book of the law, though objected to as inconsistent with the rest of his conduct, will appear to him who considers it with due attention to be perfectly natural and intelligible. It is well known that the utmost pains had been taken by the impious predecessors of that prince to destroy or corrupt all the copies of the law of which they succeeded in obtaining possession. Manasseh, in particular, is represented by the rabbins as having obliterated the sacred name of Jehovah from every volume within his reach ; and though it is not, therefore, to be imagined that copies, and correct copies, of the Pentateuch had ceased to exist, these were doubtless comparatively few, as well as far removed from the atmosphere of the court. Now if the case be so, it will follow as a matter of course that Josiah, though instructed by his guardians, as far as their means went, in his duty

towards God, had never, till Hilkiah publicly read them from the copy discovered in the temple, been aware of the fearful threatenings of the law against idolatry; and hence his horror as the idea rose into his mind that from such judgments there was but slender chance of the polluted nation escaping. Again, Josiah might be more than commonly affected by the declarations of this particular copy, in consequence of receiving some convincing proofs of its authenticity. Hitherto he had studied in volumes of whose correctness in every particular there was some cause to doubt; and we need not remind the reader, that the very suspicion of a work being spurious takes away prodigiously from the influence which it would otherwise exert over men's minds. Be this, however, as it may, Josiah's agitation was not different from that which any pious Christian would experience were he accidentally to become possessed of the original of any of the gospels or epistles of which he had frequently perused the copies.

It may, perhaps, be objected to the portion of history now under review, that it describes a state of society to which human experience presents no parallel. Here was a people miraculously presented with a religion from God, and assured, on the one hand, that so long as they adhered to that religion their affairs would be prosperous; on the other, that calamity and misfortune would attend the abandonment of it: how can the fact of their repeated apostasy be accounted for on any principles of reason or common sense? We reply, that no difficulty on record is susceptible of a more easy or satisfactory solution, as the following statement will show:—

Let it be borne in mind that the law of Moses rested none of its claims to obedience on the sanction of rewards and punishments in a future state. The amount of its promises was, that health, length of days, wealth, and general prosperity would be the portion of such as strictly observed it; while poverty, disease, war, and a violent end were to be the fate of those who set its enactments at defiance. As long as the theocracy continued in full operation, these results were seen constantly to follow, and men probably abstained from inquiring very eagerly into doctrines of which the necessity was not felt. But the change in the external form of government from the judicial and patri-

archal to the monarchical gradually weakened, though it never totally destroyed, the theocratic administration. It had this effect, however, that it placed the Israelites, apparently at least, on a footing of more perfect equality than formerly with the heathen nations round them; and taught them by degrees to look more to the arm of flesh than to the power of the invisible Creator for protection.

When such an effect was once produced, as during the latter reigns seems decidedly to have been the case, the proneness both of the people and their sovereigns to fall into idolatry may readily be explained. They saw other states, of whose heathenism they were aware, great and flourishing; they themselves continued to fill but a very secondary rank among the nations; and they began, by degrees, to doubt whether the gods of Assyria, or even of Egypt, were not more powerful than Jehovah. This it was which so frequently induced them to abjure the worship of the true God; and though they invariably suffered for their crimes, their sufferings were not sufficient to cure them of the propensity. Besides, the law of Moses was loaded with rites and ceremonies exceedingly useful, but toilsome and fatiguing to be attended to: the very indisposition to continue them was not without its weight in producing a tendency to apostacy. In a word, the condition of society was such, that the promise of temporal rewards and the threat of temporal punishments were no longer adequate to sway men's minds; and there cannot be a question that this, like other changes in the circumstances of the chosen people, was brought about by God for the wisest and best of purposes. That ample advantage was taken of it, if we may venture so to express ourselves, every reader of the Old Testament must perceive who turns to the writings of the prophets whom God from time to time raised up. He will discover these numerous allusions to that better revelation which it was reserved for the Messiah to bestow; while the future history of the Jews demonstrates that such were by no means lost even upon that stiff-necked and perverse people.

CHAPTER VI.

Retrospect of Profane History—Succession of Kings of Judah—Jerusalem reduced—Is pardoned—Revolts, and is destroyed—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4803.—B. C. 608.

THAT the principal thread of Sacred History might not be broken, we have passed over unnoticed several occurrences both in Assyria and Egypt of which, however, as they bear strongly upon the fate of the Jewish people, it will be proper in this place to give some account.

It has been stated that at the commencement of the reign of Esar-haddon, King of Assyria, the Babylonians and Medes revolted; and that the former, after a war of nine-and-twenty years' duration, were again reduced to subjection. The case was widely different with respect to the Medes, who gallantly maintained their independence, not only during the government of Esar-haddon, but throughout that of his successor, Ninus III. Dejoces, or Artæus, the founder of Ecbatana, was their leader at the beginning of the contest; and he transmitted the crown, with great glory, to his son Phraortes, who, in the year B. C. 663, exactly four years after the accession of Ninus to the Assyrian throne, assumed the reins of government. Between these two princes the war seems to have been carried on with no great vigour; but Ninus, dying in 658, was succeeded by Nebuchodonosor, who made extensive preparations to recover the territories which his grandfather had lost.

Nebuchodonosor had filled the throne about twelve years when he issued orders that all the provinces which owed allegiance to the Assyrian crown should contribute each its contingent for the purpose of aiding him in a great expedition against Media. Among others, the Jews, Syrians, and Phœnicians were called upon to enlist under his standard; but these, either through the intrigues of the Egyptian court, or from some other motive, paid no attention to the summons.

Notwithstanding this diminution to his expected force, Nebuchodonosor took the field; and defeating his rival in a bloody battle, pursued him to Ecbatana, which he closely invested. The city held out for some time, but at last yielded in the year 641; after which the victorious monarch turned his attention to the chastisement of those states which had deserted him in time of need. He accordingly despatched Holofernes, one of his principal officers, with a numerous army, who laid waste a large portion of Cilicia and Syria as well as part of Arabia and Armenia; and who, making himself master of Tyre and Sidon, and the whole of the seacoast as far as Azotus and Askelon, advanced next against the land of Judea.

The first place before which he sat down was Bethulia, a small but strongly fortified city, which covered the approaches to the capital through the hill country. This he invested with an army of 170,000 men; and taking possession of the watercourses and fountains near, reduced both the town and its inhabitants to great straits. In this emergency, Judith, a patriotic and high-minded woman, determined to risk her life and honour in defence of her country. With the sanction of the proper authorities she passed out into the enemy's camp, attended by a single maid; caused herself to be introduced to Holofernes, whom she speedily captivated with her beauty and agreeable address; and having prevailed upon him to issue instructions to the guards on no occasion to impede her progress backwards and forwards, she finally pretended to accede to his desire of placing her in his harem. But Judith's designs were of a very different nature from those attributed to her by the Assyrian general. On that very night, while Holofernes lay asleep in his tent, overcome with wine and revelling, she slew him with his own sword; and escaping back to Bethulia, laid the head of their great enemy at the feet of the rulers of the place. In those days the death of a leader, more especially under circumstances so remarkable, appears invariably to have infused dismay into an army; and the effect on the present occasion was not different from the ordinary routine of events. The Assyrians, discovering on the following morning that Holofernes was murdered, broke up their camp in great confusion, and retreated from before Bethulia, griev-

ously harassed by parties of irregular militia which hung upon their rear.

The above circumstance occurred in the year B. C. 640; and in 636, Nebuchodonosor died. He was succeeded by Sarac or Sardanapalus II., an indolent and effeminate prince, who devoted his whole time to the enjoyment of feasts and revelry, to the utter neglect of business, both public and private. At this time the empire was again in a state of confusion; for the Babylonians and Medes, encouraged by the defeat of Holofernes, hastened to renew hostilities; and the latter were already in possession of Ecbatana, which they had recovered from Nebuchodonosor. Against enemies so warlike and so powerful Sardanapalus could make no effectual head. After obtaining several successes over them, he permitted himself to be surprised while indulging in his favourite occupation of feasting; and his army being cut to pieces, he was driven within the walls of Nineveh, which now became exposed to the horrors of a siege. It was taken and utterly despoiled in the year B. C. 606, Sardanapalus himself perishing in the flames of his palace, to which he set fire.

Such was the fate of the great Assyrian capital, after it had existed from the days of Nimrod through nineteen centuries, while the empire itself became divided into portions; Nabopolassar reigning independently at Babylon, as Cyaxares I., King of Media, did at Ecbatana. Between these two sovereigns a strict affinity subsisted; Nebuchadnezzar, the son of the former, being married to a daughter of the latter: and during some time these empires were at peace; but between Babylon and Egypt there was war, and for a while the Babylonians suffered severely in the struggle.

That we may connect these events with the annals of Judea, it will be necessary to say a few words touching the condition of Egypt.

In the outline which we gave of the history of that nation, we brought down the succession to So, or Sebecon,*

* It is of this Sebecon that Herodotus tells the story, that having offended the military orders, they refused to serve under him against the Assyrians; but that Vulcan gained for him a great victory by causing a quantity of field-mice to eat the strings of the Assyrian bows the night previous to a battle.

whom Anysis, the Ethiopian, deprived for a season of his crown, and whom Sennacherib, King of Assyria, had invaded. At the decease of that monarch, a species of anarchy ensued, twelve princes administering the affairs of the country at the same time; but at the end of fifteen years the supreme power passed into the hands of Psammeticus, one of the number. It had been foretold by an oracle, that he among them who should first pour out an oblation from a brazen vessel should be sole sovereign of Egypt; and as Psammeticus accidentally accomplished the exploit by using his helmet on a certain occasion, his brother princes conspired against him and drove him into the fens. He concealed himself here, till several bands of Ionian and Carian pirates coming in his way he hired them to serve against his rivals; and being successful in the war which ensued, he verified the declaration of the oracle by becoming sole king of Egypt. Psammeticus was the father of Nekus, or Pharaoh-nechoh, who mounted the throne in 619; and who, in 608, defeated and slew Josiah, King of Judea, as has been related in the preceding chapter.

At the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz, his second son (known also by the name of Shallum), was anointed king; but the young prince appears to have possessed none of the good qualities of his father, as he certainly enjoyed no share of his good fortune. He had filled the throne barely three months when Pharaoh-nechoh, after obtaining several triumphs over the Babylonians, directed his march upon Jerusalem, and deposing Jehoahaz, sent him a prisoner into Egypt, while he himself set up the elder of Josiah's sons in his room. From this prince he exacted an oath of fealty, imposing at the same time an annual tribute upon his kingdom; and that he might have before his eyes a constant memorial of his condition, he changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim. But Judea at least derived no benefit from its change of masters. Jehoiakim was in every respect as vicious and as imprudent as his brother Jehoahaz; and the iniquities both of the sovereign and the people soon brought upon them the vengeance of the Most High.

There flourished at this period several illustrious prophets, such as Jeremiah, Urijah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Nahum; all of whom strenuously exerted themselves to stem the torrent of apostasy and crime. Jeremiah, in particular,

remonstrated strongly with his sovereign, declaring in explicit terms the results that must ensue ; while Urijah, in terms no less explicit, told a similar tale. The expostulations of these good men, however, so far from being received as they merited, only drew down upon their own heads the fury of a corrupt court : Jeremiah was cast into prison, where he narrowly escaped being put to death ; while Urijah, fleeing into Egypt, was taken there and publicly executed. But matters were rapidly approaching a crisis which no exertion of human policy could avert.

The effect of Pharaoh-nechoh's successes over the Babylonian forces was to draw into rebellion the whole of Syria and Palestine, and to cause a general transfer of the allegiance of the tribes who inhabited them to the crown of Egypt. In this state things continued till Nabopolassar, finding that his years and infirmities rendered him incapable of managing the concerns of a distracted empire, associated with himself in the government his son Nebuchadnezzar, a prince of great ability and boundless ambition. The latter soon showed himself worthy of the trust which his father reposed in him ; for he overthrew the Egyptian army in a great battle on the Euphrates ; and marching rapidly into Syria and Palestine, reduced them to submission. Among other cities which he besieged and took was Jerusalem. It fell into his hands in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, B. C. 605 ; and the temple being plundered, and the king with most of his nobles removed into Babylon, from that era the commencement of the captivity is to be dated. When he performed this exploit, Nebuchadnezzar was, as we have seen, the coadjutor of his father on the throne of Babylon ; but intelligence reaching him here of Nabopolassar's death, he left the bulk of his army to conduct the prisoners into Chaldea, while he himself at the head of a light party took the track through the desert. He reached his own dominions long before the heavy column, encumbered as it was with baggage and captives, could arrive ; and he found time to allot a proper residence to the Hebrews in general, but to Jehoiakim himself he restored his liberty, after receiving from him a solemn pledge that he would not again raise the standard of revolt or engage in any conspiracy. But Jehoiakim, fickle as he was rash, adhered to the terms of his stipulation something less than three years, when he again

put himself under the protection of Egypt, and refused to pay the tribute which Nebuchadnezzar had imposed upon him.

He had no sooner taken this insane step than Jeremiah the prophet made haste to declare the consequences that should accrue from it. By many signs as well as by words he foretold the misery and desolation which would come upon his country, the captivity of its children during seventy years, with other heavy calamities that hung over them; but his note of sorrow, instead of leading the people to repentance, only stirred up the rage of all ranks against him. Under these circumstances he was compelled to conceal himself: though even then he abstained not from exerting every nerve to bring about the reformation of his infatuated countrymen. With this view he caused Baruch the scribe to collect into one book all the prophecies which he had uttered from the commencement of his career, in the thirteenth year of Josiah, to that moment; and he commanded him to go up into the temple on the day of expiation, and there read it publicly in the ears of the people.

Baruch did as Jeremiah required, and read the melancholy catalogue of evils to come, first to the people at large and afterward to the princes, who seem to have been greatly alarmed, if they were not morally benefited by the lecture. They cautioned the scribe to hide himself while they carried to the king a report of what had happened; and when the king commanded the book to be read in his presence also, one of their own number performed the office. But Jehoiakim's anger rose in proportion to the severity of the denunciations of which he saw himself the object. He snatched the book from the hand of the secretary, cut it in pieces with a knife, and threw the fragments upon the fire beside which he stood; and then issued peremptory orders for the apprehension of the prophet, as well as of the amanuensis who had presumed thus to insult him. Jeremiah and Baruch, however, were in a place of concealment, where they applied themselves to the composition of another volume; and Jehoiakim soon found himself involved in affairs of too much moment to leave leisure for the prosecution of a very diligent search.

In the mean while, Nebuchadnezzar was again on his march towards Jerusalem, which he again entered as a con-

queror. Jehoiakim was on this occasion loaded with chains for the purpose of being sent into Babylon; but on his renewed submission the king once more pardoned him, and reinstated him on a throne shorn of all its splendours. Great multitudes of the people, however, were removed, while orders were issued that a selection should be made from among the children of the royal and noble families, of a certain number of persons to attend upon the person of the king. Among these we find that Daniel went into captivity, as well as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and that on arriving at Babylon they were subjected, as was customary, to a change of name; Daniel henceforth appeared as Belteshazzar, while his companions took the titles of Shadrac, Meshac, and Abed-nego.

The clemency shown by Nebuchadnezzar towards Jehoiakim produced no salutary effect upon the mind of that apostate. Within the space of a year or two he was again in rebellion; and the Babylonian monarch, not having leisure himself to chastise him, commanded all his governors in the provinces around Judea to wage war against him. By these he was closely shut up in his capital, which for the third time was subjected to a siege; and at last venturing to make a sortie at the head of a division of the garrison, he was taken prisoner and slain. His body was cast in contumely to be devoured by dogs on the highway, and his son Jehoiachin mounted the throne in his stead.

The reign of this monarch, who appears to have
B. C. been no less corrupt than his father, lasted no more
597. than three months; at the end of which period Nebuchadnezzar arrived to conduct the siege of Jerusalem in person. Jehoiachin now saw that further resistance was fruitless. He surrendered the place, and delivered himself, with his mother, his princes, and ministers, into the hands of the conqueror; and though his life was spared, he was removed to Babylon and cast into prison. There he languished seven-and-thirty years, till Evil-merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, came to the throne, who set him at liberty and provided him with an honourable maintenance.

It seems to have been the wish of the Babylonian monarch to preserve Jerusalem entire, and to leave Judea in the rank of a tributary kingdom; for though he removed all the leading men and men renowned for their talents into Chal-

dea, he still permitted the common people to enjoy their ancient possessions. He even raised Mattaniah, the third son of Josiah, to the royal dignity, changing his name to Zedekiah, and exacting from him an oath of dependence ; but his longsuffering was wasted upon a people so prone to rebellion as the corrupt and degraded descendants of the patriarch Jacob. The Chaldean troops were scarcely withdrawn, when the Moabites, the Edomites, the Zidonians, and the Tyrians sent ambassadors to Jerusalem with propositions of a revolt ; and they found the new king with his infatuated counsellors far from indisposed to listen to the suggestion. One man, indeed, Jeremiah the prophet, strongly set his face against a measure so ruinous. He addressed himself in the peculiar manner of his calling to the kings of all the states, as well as to his countrymen both in Judea and Babylon ; and assured them, by the most striking emblems, that it was not less their wisdom than their duty to live in obedience to the King of Chaldea, and to fulfil the stipulations into which they had entered. But his admonitions, not less than his prophetic declarations, were treated with contempt by persons over whose minds a strong delusion had fallen ; and Providence brought its own wise ends to pass through the blindness of the very men who would have resisted its operations.

Among other prisoners at Babylon, there was at this time a celebrated prophet of the name of Ezekiel, one of whose books is yet to be found in the canon of Holy Scripture. The same spirit which animated Jeremiah in Palestine animated him beyond the Euphrates ; insomuch that both foretold at the same moment, and almost in the same words, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. This they did by a variety of types and signs : Jeremiah, for example, by breaking before the eyes of the crowd an earthen vessel ; Ezekiel by digging a hole through the wall of his house, and carrying his furniture about the place in manifest dismay. But neither their words nor their signs produced the smallest effect upon those to whom they were addressed, or retarded for a moment what may be termed the accomplishment of an evitable destiny. Zedekiah had filled the throne barely seven years when he contracted an alliance with Pharaoh-hophrah, the grandson of Pharaoh-nechoh, and the hereditary enemy of the Babylonian emperor ; and, with a degree of infatuation

hardly to be accounted for, withdrew his allegiance from Nebuchadnezzar.

It was not in accordance with the temper of the B. C. 586. Babylonian monarch to permit an act of ingratitude so glaring to pass long unpunished. He put his troops instantly in motion ; and sweeping the open country of the detachments which Zedekiah sent out to impede his march, formed for the fourth time the siege of Jerusalem. To both parties it was well known that the present was a crisis of life or death. Judea had rebelled too often again to hope for pardon ; and Babylon was too much irritated to dream of again affording it. Both the attack and defence were accordingly conducted with the fury of despair ; and the greatest privations were borne, if not cheerfully, at least with dogged and sullen patience. There cannot be a doubt that famine must before long have compelled the garrison of Jerusalem to surrender, inasmuch as both the troops and the people were driven to the utmost extremity for the common necessities of life ; when Pharaoh-hophrah arriving took the field, and made as if he intended to relieve his ally from the danger which threatened him. Great was the joy in Jerusalem when the intelligence of this event arrived ; and, unhappily, it showed itself in a form diametrically the reverse of that which it ought to have assumed. While the prospect of calamity was before the Jews, they, as too frequently happens, made a show of returning to the service of Jehovah ; and, in order to propitiate him, proclaimed a jubilee, by which the slaves belonging to their own nation universally obtained their freedom. But the Babylonians no sooner withdrew from before the city than they revoked this humane decree ; and, with inexcusable barbarity and fickleness, reclaimed the persons whom they had so recently manumitted. Jeremiah was immediately commissioned to reprove them for their guilt, which he did in terms so direct, predicting at the same time a speedy punishment, that the nobles insisted upon Zedekiah's putting him to death ; and he was thrust into a wretched dungeon, where he must have inevitably perished had not Ebed-melech, one of the king's eunuchs, used his influence to obtain for him a removal to a better prison.

Such was the state of affairs in Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, after compelling Hophrah to withdraw into his

own country, once more invested it on every side. There was now no hope of assistance from without ; and the scanty stores which he had been enabled to collect were soon exhausted ; so that Zedekiah, in an agony of despair, sent for Jeremiah, and entreated him to advise how it behooved him to act. The prophet, without a moment's hesitation, recommended him to surrender ; but, desperate as his circumstances were, Zedekiah would not listen to this counsel. At last, after the utmost degree of misery had been borne ; after not the offal merely, with other disgusting viands, had been sold at an enormous price, but persons were fain to exist upon the dead bodies of their friends and neighbours, Jerusalem was carried by assault, and every street and square in the noble city became a scene of carnage and dismay. Zedekiah himself was taken alive, while endeavouring to escape in the darkness ; his children and princes were likewise secured ; and the former having been slain before his face, his eyes were put out, and he was sent in chains to drag out a miserable existence in a dungeon at Babylon. Finally, Nebuzar-adan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guards, received orders to burn the city with fire ; and after he had thoroughly plundered it, polluted the sanctuary, beaten down the walls, and otherwise defaced it, he obeyed the savage command to the letter. The above event occurred in the year B. C. 586, exactly 434 years from the completion of Solomon's temple, and 404 from the revolt of the ten tribes, and the division of the Israelites into two kingdoms. As to the inhabitants of Judea, they were almost all carried captive to Babylon, the high-priest with many of the principal men among them being put to death ; and a remnant only of the lowest order of agriculturists were left under the management of Gedaliah, a friend of Jeremiah, to till the soil. Thus were God's threats against his rebellious people fulfilled ; and Judah, like Israel, ceased for a time to fill a place among the nations.

We are not ignorant that in the pages of the Sacred Volume from which the preceding details are gathered, several transactions are detailed, to which the ignorant and the prejudiced may not be unapt to offer frivolous objections. The conduct of Judith, for example, in murdering Holofernes may be asserted to stand directly opposed to all our notions of right and wrong ; while many of the assertions of the

prophets, as well as their reputed deeds, lie open to contradiction and even to ridicule. How is it possible to believe that one prophet could travel five hundred miles, from Jerusalem to the banks of the Euphrates, for the sole purpose of hiding his girdle under a stone? Or what opinion could be formed of the sense of another, who beat down a portion of the wall of his house, that he might carry through the breach articles of furniture, and wander with them up and down a large city? We will notice these difficulties as we have noticed others—briefly, though sufficiently at length to satisfy all impartial persons that the Bible is justly chargeable neither with falsehood nor absurdity.

With respect to the story of Judith, it is worthy of remark, that the book in which it stands recorded, as it was not received into the canon of Scripture by the primitive church, nor regarded as of Divine authority by the Jews themselves, so has it been universally rejected by the reformed churches of modern Europe. Of it, therefore, it is necessary to say no more than that it appears to contain a correct account of a very memorable transaction; but as the transaction in question is not held to have been narrated by dictation from the Spirit of God, even the semblance of approval is not bestowed, at least by the Almighty, upon the chief actor. The truth is, that Judith's behaviour, though morally inexcusable, was, under the circumstances in which her country stood, in the highest degree heroic; and it is not in the annals of the Jews only that we find transactions triumphantly handed down to posterity, the real virtue of which is more than disputable.

The conduct of the prophets again, in a variety of instances, cannot excite one moment's uneasiness in the mind of any one who is at all aware of the customs of eastern nations, even at this day. Whenever men in these regions of romance, desire to attract more than common attention, they universally adopt a phraseology which, to our colder imaginations, sounds like falsehood: they speak of their own visions, or dreams, or waking thoughts, as of things actually performed by themselves or others. Thus, when Jeremiah talked to his countrymen of his hiding a girdle under a rock on the Euphrates; of his returning to Jerusalem, going back again, and finding the girdle in a state of decay, though he addressed them in terms such as they per-

fectly comprehended, he never even designed them to believe that he had really performed this arduous journey. In like manner, though among the inhabitants of London the custom of speaking by signs or symbols would excite either ridicule or compassion towards the individual thus addressing them, in the east the case is, even at present, widely different; and so long ago as the days of Jeremiah it prevailed to a still greater degree than it prevails now. The following observations of the illustrious Warburton seem to us so pertinent to the subject, that we cannot refuse ourselves the satisfaction of transcribing them; though there is one material point in which we cannot wholly agree with the bishop. "Language," says he, "as appears from the nature of the thing, from the records of history, and from the remains of the most ancient languages yet remaining, was at first extremely rude, narrow, and equivocal; so that men would be perpetually at a loss on any new conception or uncommon accident to explain themselves to one another; the art of enlarging language by a scientific analogy being a late invention: this would necessarily set them on, therefore, upon supplying the deficiencies of speech by apt and significant signs. Accordingly, in the first ages of the world, mutual converse was upheld by a mixed discourse of words and actions: hence came the eastern phrase *the voice of the sign*; and use and custom, as in most other affairs of life, improving what has arisen out of necessity into ornament, this practice subsisted long after the necessity was over; especially among the eastern people, whose natural temperament inclined them to a mode of conversation which so well exercised their vivacity by motion, and so much gratified it by a perpetual representation of material images. Of this we have innumerable instances in Holy Scripture: as where the false prophet pushed with horns of iron, to denote the entire overthrow of the Assyrians; where Jeremiah, by God's direction, hides the linen girdle in a hole of the rock near the Euphrates; where he breaks a potter's vessel in the sight of the people, puts on bands and yokes, and casts a book into the Euphrates: where Ezekiel, by the same appointment, delineates the siege of Jerusalem on a tile; weighs the hair of his head and beard with balances; carries out his household stuff through a hole made in the wall; and joins

together two sticks, after writing on them for Judah and Israel. By those actions the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, and conversed with them in signs; but when God teaches the prophets, and in compliance with the custom of that time, condescends to the same mode of instruction, then the significant action is generally changed into a vision, either natural or extraordinary; as where the prophet Jeremiah is bid to regard the rod of the almond-ree and the seething-pot; the work on the potter's wheel, and the baskets of good and bad figs; and the prophet Ezekiel, the ideal scene of the resurrection of dry bones. The significant action, I say, was in this case generally changed into a vision, but not always. For as sometimes when the instruction was for the people, the significant action was, perhaps, in vision; so sometimes again, though the instruction was only for the prophet, God would set him upon a real expressive action, whose obvious meaning contained the intelligence proposed or sought. The excellent Maimonides, not attending to this primitive mode of information, is much scandalized at several of these actions, unbecoming, as he supposed, the dignity of the prophetic office; and is therefore for resolving them into supernatural visions, impressed on the imaginations of the prophets. In which he is followed by Christian writers, much to the discredit, as I conceive, of revelation, and to the triumph of libertinism and infidelity; the actions being delivered as realities, and those writers representing them as mean, absurd, and fanatical, and exposing the prophets to contempt. But what is it they will gain by this expedient? The charge of fanaticism and absurdity will follow the prophet in his visions, when they have removed it from his waking actions; for if these actions were absurd and fanatical in the real representation, they must needs be so in the imaginary, the same turn of mind operating both asleep and awake. The judicious reader, therefore, cannot but observe that the reasonable and true defence of the prophetic writings is what is here offered; where we show that information by action was, at this time and place, a very familiar mode of conversation."*

We will not weaken the force of this quotation by adding

* Divine Legation, book iv sect. 4.

any observations of our own, further than by pointing out where it is that we venture to dissent from the learned prelate's reasons. We conceive that such declarations as those respecting the hiding of the girdle at the Euphrates are clearly to be taken as expressive of a significative action in vision; and as such forms of speech were in constant use, his lordship's argument will suffer no injury by the admission.

CHAPTER VII.

State of the Jews after their Captivity—Rebellion of Johanan—Its Consequences—Sketch of Profane History—Fortunes of Daniel and his Friends—Cyrus gives Permission that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 4825.—B. C. 586.

As soon as Nebuchadnezzar withdrew with his army, great multitudes of people who had sought temporary concealment among the fastnesses and woods came forth, and put themselves under the guidance of Gedaliah, whom he had nominated as governor of Judea. Among these were Johanan and Jonathan, the sons of Reziab, and Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah; the latter a man of some pretensions and great ambition, who immediately began to form plans for the assumption of supreme power, to which, being of the blood-royal, he considered himself entitled. With this view he entered into a secret treaty with Baalis, King of the Ammonites; but in spite of his utmost care, intelligence of the movement reached Johanan, who hastened to put the governor on his guard. Gedaliah, however, being a man of singularly honourable mind, would not give credence to the report; and, to prove that he entertained no suspicion of Ishmael, invited him, among other distinguished guests, to an entertainment. The traitor hesitated not to avail himself of the opportunity thus furnished. He introduced armed retainers into Gedaliah's house, and

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murdering him at his own table, hoisted the standard of revolt.

For a short time fortune appeared to favour him; he put to death many influential persons whom he suspected to be hostile to his designs and succeeded in surprising; but in the end, feeling himself insecure at Mizpah, the place where Gedaliah had established his court, he retired with his adherents on the road to Ammon, carrying with him Jeremiah the prophet, and Zedekiah, and the late king's daughters. It was his design to retire into the territories of his ally, King Baalis, but understanding that Johanan with a considerable force was in close pursuit he deserted his followers, and accompanied by eight attendants effected his escape. So far matters went on prosperously; but now Johanan, though conscious of his own innocence, began to be apprehensive of the consequences, as soon as the murder of Gedaliah should be communicated to the King of Babylon. He accordingly drew his forces to a head at Chimham, a place not far from Bethlehem, and consequently on the road to Egypt, with the design, in case Nebuchadnezzar should exhibit a disposition to charge them with the crimes which Ishmael had committed, of retiring beyond the Arabian Gulf, and seeking the protection of Pharaoh. It happened that Johanan's corps had recovered the prisoners whom Ishmael was transporting into Ammon, and Jeremiah, as a necessary consequence, was now in the camp. Him the chiefs consulted as to the propriety of the proposed flight, and on his assuring them that much evil would follow in the event of their carrying it into effect, they, with great apparent readiness, consented to abandon the scheme; but a rumour of Nebuchadnezzar's approach no sooner reached them, than their faith in the Divine protection evaporated, and they retired into Egypt, compelling the reluctant prophet to follow them. Here they soon fell into idolatry, in spite of the earnest remonstrances of Jeremiah, who, the more to alarm them, foretold that within eighteen years Nebuchadnezzar would overrun the country in which they had vainly expected to find shelter; and at the close of the appointed period they discovered, to their sorrow, that the prophet had not forewarned them of events undetermined by destiny.

From this date the history both of Jeremiah and Ezekiel

is a blank. The former is supposed, indeed, to have spent the remainder of his days in Egypt, where he recorded many prophecies, some of them denunciatory of judgments to the heathen nations, some declaratory of Judah's restoration, and some indicative of the great deliverance which should in due time be wrought by the Messiah. In like manner Ezekiel continued to the last to exercise his divine right, and to perform the duties of a counsellor and adviser to his countrymen; but where or by what means these holy men closed their mortal pilgrimage, we possess no correct grounds for determining.

In the mean while many great and important transactions were passing in other parts of the world, as well as among the Jewish exiles who had been removed to Babylon. We stated some time ago, that in the number of the children of the nobility transported to the Chaldean capital on the occasion of the first capture of Jerusalem, under King Jehoiakim, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were found. Placed with their companions in captivity under the care of Ashpenaz, chief of the eunuchs, they received the most liberal education which it was in the power of their masters to bestow; and in due time they were found to excel all their competitors both in knowledge and personal comeliness. But many years elapsed ere they were enabled to give proofs of their wisdom, or turn the accomplishments which they had acquired to the benefit of their nation; inasmuch as the monarch whom they were appointed to serve found no leisure to inquire into their proficiency.

Immediately on the capture of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar directed his columns against the other nations of Asia Minor, which one by one he invaded and totally subdued. The Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Arabians, the Philistines, the Sidonians, and the Abyssinians, all felt the weight of his prowess, and all received the punishment which God's prophets had denounced against them.* He moved next towards ancient Tyre and closely besieged it; after a protracted defence

* The Ammonites, Amos i.; Ezekiel xxv. The Moabites, Ezekiel xxv.; Jeremiah xxv. and xlviii. The Edomites, Amos i.; Obadiah x.; Jeremiah xlix. The Arabians, Jeremiah xxv. Sidonians, Jeremiah xxv.; Ezekiel xxvii. Philistines, Jeremiah xxv.; Ezekiel xxv. Ethiopians, or Abyssinians, Isaiah xviii.; Ezekiel xxx.

of thirteen years Tyre also fell, as Ezekiel had foretold (xxvi. 1-11), but the inhabitants having removed their effects to the island, the conquerors reaped little benefit of plunder. To make amends for this disappointment B. C. he pushed upon Egypt, which he entirely overran, enriching his followers with the spoil of this fertile empire; and he reduced it to so low an ebb, that for forty years after it lay almost desolate. Nor was he unmindful of the insult which had been put upon him by the murder of his deputy Gedaliah; he detached Nebuzar-adan, one of his generals, into Palestine, who traversed it from extremity to extremity, completing the desolation which his master had begun, and carrying 745 persons of the chiefs of the remnant, to join their brothers in captivity at Babylon.

Having thus vindicated the honour of his crown, B. C. and established an ascendancy over an empire more extensive than ever before obeyed the dictates of one man, Nebuchadnezzar returned to his capital, which he carefully adorned with the most curious works of art, and enriched with plunder. He was thus employed when on a certain night an extraordinary dream came upon him; and anxious as to its import, he summoned to his presence all the magi or wise men that they might interpret it. Whether he had really forgotten the tenor of the vision, or only kept it back in order to try the pretensions of his magi, may be questioned; but as he refused to inform them of the nature of the images presented to his sleeping imagination, they one and all declared their inability to satisfy him. The king was exceedingly enraged, and issued a peremptory order that unless his dream was explained within a certain time, all the magi should be put to death; and the philosophers withdrew with the melancholy prospect before them that their doom was fixed.

Among others who at this time took rank in the list of magi were Daniel and his three friends, upon whom not less than upon the rest sentence of death was passed. In this emergency they prayed earnestly to God, who was pleased to exhibit to Daniel the same mystery which he had shown to Nebuchadnezzar, as well as to inspire him with wisdom to unravel it. Daniel accordingly proceeded on the following day to the palace, and having obtained an

audience of the sovereign, declared himself ready to satisfy his wishes. "Thou, O king," said he, as soon as Nebuchadnezzar consented to hear him, "sawest, and behold a great image whose brightness was excellent stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms were of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Such was precisely the vision which had passed before the eyes of the king, whose astonishment at the accuracy with which Daniel described it knew no bounds; but when the seer went on to explain to him what the dream denoted he fell upon his face and would have worshipped him as a god. From that time, however, Daniel stood high in the royal favour. The king loaded him with presents, set him at the head of all the magi, nominating him to the government of the province of Babylon, and at his recommendation set his three friends each at the head of a valuable department.

Nebuchadnezzar's reverence for the God of Israel B. C. was not, however, of long continuance; for we find 569. him soon after this setting up a colossal statue of his father, to which he required all his subjects to pay divine honours. To the edict which commanded an act of such gross apostasy Daniel's friends refused to pay obedience, and they were in consequence cast into the middle of a furnace rendered more than ordinarily hot; but Jehovah, in whom they trusted, forsook them not, for he sent his angel to attend them in the midst of the flames, and to hinder "so much as a hair of their heads from being singed." They were instantly entreated by the astonished monarch to come forth. Additional honours were heaped upon them, and a decree passed that the God of Israel should be devoutly worshipped by every tribe, nation, and

language that lived under the protection of the Babylonian crown.

B. C. 568. Time passed, and the heart of Nebuchadnezzar became again swollen with pride, as he contemplated the magnitude of his possessions and the extent of his power. It is even believed that he meditated an act of folly so extravagant as the assumption of divine honours to himself; when Jehovah once more sent to him a dream of fearful import. He explained to Daniel that he beheld a magnificent tree whose top reached to heaven, and whose branches overshadowed the earth; and that while he was admiring it there came an angel from heaven who exclaimed, with a loud voice, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beast get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stumps of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and of brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given him, and let seven times pass over him." Daniel shuddered as he listened to this awful denunciation. He hesitated not, however, to declare its import, which was fulfilled by the continued insanity of the king throughout seven years; during the whole of which time he laboured under the delusion of believing himself to be an ox, and crept like a beast of the field upon his hands and knees. But the punishment was not without its intended effect. The king recovered, publicly expressed his penitence and humility, and after reigning prosperously a few years longer, died in peace, and left the crown to his son.

B. C. 561. Evil-merodach, the name of the prince who now ascended the throne of Babylon, seems to have possessed few of the qualifications necessary in a sovereign; and his reign, which endured only three years, was exceedingly disastrous. That he was at least humane, however, his release of Jêhoiachin from prison, and supplying him with a decent maintenance, proves; but, jealous of the growing power of the Medes, he formed a formidable league against them, and was defeated and slain by Cyrus, the leader of the combined army of Persians and Medes. He was succeeded by his son, Belshazzar, a man not less

weak and far more impious than his father, of whose history a few words will suffice to convey an outline.

Belshazzar received the sceptre in 558, and held it for five years. His cruelties and tyranny were excessive, of which Xenophon supplies us with two memorable instances. He slew the son of Gobryas, one of his leading nobles, because the young man happened to hit with his spear a lion and a bear which the king had missed; and he brutally mutilated Gadatos, because one of the royal concubines praised his beauty. During his reign it was that Daniel was favoured with those remarkable visions in which the four empires of the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, and Romans are depicted; and Alexander the Great is introduced under the symbol of a ram, as Darius Codomanus is shadowed forth as a he-goat. But the most memorable event which occurred in this reign was the denunciation of Belshazzar's destruction, at a moment when the tyrant considered himself most secure.

It happened, not, as is generally supposed upon the authority of Herodotus, during the siege of Babylon 553. by Cyrus, but several years previous to that event, that Belshazzar assembled a thousand of his chief nobles at a banquet, into which he sacrilegiously introduced the sacred vessels from the temple at Jerusalem, which his predecessors had constantly treated with respect. The hour of midnight was come, and the voice of mirth and revelry rolled high, when there suddenly appeared upon the wall the vision of a human hand, in the act of inscribing certain characters, as it were, of fire. Great was the dismay of the monarch and his guests at this terrible interruption to their festivity; and it rose higher when the characters were found to be such as no Chaldean scholar could decipher. Then it was that the queen-mother, whose regard for Daniel seems to have been unabated, suggested to her son the propriety of consulting him on the occasion; and Belshazzar, though he had not before deigned to notice the man to whom his great ancestor had owed himself under so many obligations, lost no time in calling him to his presence. Daniel obeyed the summons; he refused the gifts which the king would have forced upon him, but informed him that the writing upon the wall foretold his speedy destruction; and the words were yet in his mouth, when a

band of conspirators burst in, and executed God's fearful sentence. The tyrant was slain, and the sceptre quickly transferred to his relative, the King of Media, known in profane history by the name of Cyaxares, and in Sacred Writ as Darius the Mede.

The prince who thus united in his own person the rival kingdoms of Babylon and Media was the fifth in descent from that Dejoces who rebelled against Esar-haddon, King of Assyria, and the grandson of Cyaxares, by whom Nineveh was taken. He was accordingly connected with the house of Nebuchadnezzar, if not by blood, at all events by alliance, inasmuch as Nebuchadnezzar took to wife the daughter of his grandfather, from whom, through her son Evil-merodach, Belshazzar was descended. Darius seems to have been of an indolent and peaceable disposition, widely different from that attributed to him by Herodotus; and having one only daughter, he readily gave her in marriage to his nephew Cyrus, the heir to the crown of Persia. That this alliance had actually taken place at the period of Darius's accession to the throne of Babylon there seems no reason to doubt; for we know that Cyrus and his queen were of the same age; and as the former had attained his sixty-third year previous to the capture of Babylon, it is incredible that the marriage could have been deferred so long, yet be productive of two sons.

We are not called upon to detail minutely all the circumstances which contributed to realize the vision of Daniel, by causing the crown of Babylon to pass from a Chaldean to a Median, and ultimately to a Persian family. Let it suffice to state, that the remote causes of the change are to be found in the rashness of Evil-merodach, who, during his father's lifetime, made a wanton inroad upon the Median territory, in which he was repulsed with loss, chiefly through the gallantry of Cyrus, then a youth of sixteen; and the defeat which the same individual afterward sustained when he formed his famous league against his uncle hastened forward the catastrophe. Matters were, however, brought to a crisis through the cruelty of Belshazzar, who effectually alienated from himself the great satraps Gobrias and Gadatas; insomuch that these chiefs instead of opposing joined Cyrus with their followers, and surrendered to him the provinces of which they possessed the govern-

ment. Through their influence, likewise, it mainly came about that Cyaxares or Darius was called to the vacant throne, as soon as Belshazzar received the reward of his manifold impieties and crimes.

B. C. 553. Darius was, as we have stated, a man of an easy and indolent disposition, who preferred the compara-

tive quiet of his ancient capital to the splendour and magnificence of the new; so he contented himself with appointing one Nabordoricus to act as his deputy in Babylon, while he himself continued to hold his court at Ecbatana. He was not, however, altogether indifferent to the prosperity of his great empire, which he divided into a hundred and twenty satrapies, subject to the control of three presidents or chief ministers; and such was his reverence for Daniel, that he appointed him to the first rank among these representatives of the imperial majesty. But it happened in the case of Daniel, as it generally happens with foreigners, that the Persian and Median nobles envied as well as hated him, and they fell upon the following device to effect his ruin: they caused Darius to issue a proclamation, that for the space of thirty days no one should present a petition either to God or man, except to the king, on pain of being cast, in case of conviction, into the lions' den. Daniel, as might be expected, paid no regard to so impious a decree. He prayed to God as usual three times a-day, and being taken in the act, was, greatly to the sorrow of Darius, condemned to undergo the threatened penalty. In this instance, however, as in that of the three holy children, Jehovah forsook not his servant. The lions refused to do him harm; he was taken up alive and unhurt from the pit, while his accusers, being caught in their own snare, were thrown to the wild beasts, which immediately devoured them.

B. C. 551. Darius swayed the sceptre two years, when he died, and was succeeded on the throne of Media by his nephew and son-in-law, Cyrus, King of Persia. Some time elapsed, however, ere Cyrus established his superiority over the province of Babylon, for Nabordoricus taking advantage of the war which raged between the Medes and Lydians, threw off the yoke, and sent auxiliaries to the latter. The confederates were defeated in the great battle of Thyborra or Thymbra, when Cyrus

opposed his camels with memorable success against the Lydian cavalry; Sardis, the capital of Cræsus's kingdom, was taken, and Cræsus himself made prisoner; and after a variety of conquests in other quarters, Babylon itself was invested. It was carried by assault in the year B. C. 536, in consequence, according to the version of Herodotus, of a diversion of the river from its channel into a large artificial lake; but more probably while the inhabitants were celebrating one of their impure religious festivals, and so ceased to guard the approaches.

The period foretold by the prophets when the captivity should cease was now at hand, and one of the first measures of Cyrus was to publish a decree, in which he authorized the Jews to return to their own country, and rebuild the temple of Jehovah. With great joy that people saw that God had at last looked upon their afflictions; and, gathering together to the number of nearly fifty thousand persons, they put themselves under the guidance of Zerubbabel, the grandson of their late king Jehoiachin, and Joshua, the grandson of Seraiah the high-priest, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death. To them the sacred vessels which belonged to the temple were restored, while commendatory letters were despatched to the several governors of Palestine, directing them to aid in the good work; and they set out in the year B. C. 536, exactly sixty-nine years since the commencement of their troubles under King Jehoiakim.

It is not very easy to imagine the satisfaction which these poor exiles must have experienced when the hills and valleys endeared to them by a thousand glorious associations once more opened to their view. They spread themselves, few as they were, over their ancient possessions, according to their tribes and lineages; applied themselves diligently to the rebuilding of their houses and cities; and, at the end of seven months, returned in a body to Jerusalem, where around its ruins several of the great festivals were held. This was followed by a general collection of funds, the preparation of materials, and the enrolment of workmen; and in the following year the foundation-stone of the second temple was laid. Not, however, with the voice of triumph alone was that pious work performed: weeping, as well as laughter, was heard; for the old men

remembered the magnificence of the original fabric, to which they dared not hope that the new would approximate. Yet was it a source of fervent thankfulness to all classes that God had not forgotten to be gracious, and for a time the operation of building was conducted with spirit.

They had not persevered long in their undertaking when the Samaritans, that mongrel race which Shalmaneser planted in the room of the ten tribes carried by him into captivity, applied for permission to join them, under the pretence that Jehovah was equally an object of worship to them as to the Jews. Zerubbabel, however, would by no means accede to the proposal. Such individuals from the ten tribes themselves as repaired to his standard he cheerfully received; but to treat the Samaritans in general as heirs of the promises accorded not with his notions of the Divine law. The consequence was, that the Samaritans became from that hour bitter enemies to the Jews. Though they could not venture to disobey the edict of Cyrus by openly opposing the progress of the work, they nevertheless prevailed upon his ministers, by bribes and iniquitous representations, to throw a variety of impediments in the way; and the building went on for several years slowly and painfully. But of these matters further notice will be taken in the next chapter, while at present we endeavour shortly to meet such difficulties as may be supposed to attach to the preceding details.

We cannot pretend, within the limits of a work like this, to take even a cursory review of the several declarations of the prophets, for the purpose of vindicating them from the charge of absurdity, or exhibiting their perfect fitness. It is sufficient to observe, as we have already done elsewhere, that the prophetic was always a mystical and symbolical language, and that it was so constituted for the very purpose of rendering the matters foretold indistinct to the existing generations. God's designs in causing his servants to foretel events were seldom to gratify the curiosity of men in any age, but almost invariably in order that his own providence might be vindicated as often as the completion of a prophecy removed the obscurity in which it was supposed to be wrapped up. Thus the visions of Daniel, though now intelligible enough, and though, in part at least, perfectly intelligible even in the days of Alexander,

neither were nor were designed to be perspicuous to the prophet's contemporaries, any more than the predictions of Ezekiel touching Gog and Magog will admit of a positive and irrefragable interpretation, such as will accord in every respect, even now. But there is nothing in this to cause mistrust even in the most sensitive mind. No truth can be better established than the authenticity of these writings; while every successive year has a tendency to render them more and more plain, and more and more comprehensible. It is true that to the authenticity of the Book of Daniel many objections have been offered. It has been classed with such narrations as those of Susannah and the Elders, Bel and the Dragon, and the Song of the three Children, because these stand in the apocryphal collections as Daniel's performances; while the distinctness of many of the written declarations, particularly with reference to the Messiah, and the peculiar phraseology of the prophet as to names, have been held to argue strongly against his title to be acknowledged as an inspired writer. We reply, that the mere fact of having his name affixed to spurious performances furnishes no argument whatever against the authenticity of any author: on the contrary, seeing that the books in question have never been received as canonical even by the Jews themselves, it operates powerfully in favour of Daniel's title to be treated as a man of acknowledged reputation, inasmuch as forgers would scarcely take the trouble to assume a name of which those to whom they addressed themselves knew nothing. Besides, there is this marked distinction in the case: the Book of Daniel was always treated with respect till the twelfth century, when Maimonides for the first time endeavoured to cast a shade upon it; whereas the others have never held a higher rank in public opinion than they hold at present.

That we are not saying more in favour of the book of Daniel than we are warranted to say, any reader of the history of the Maccabees, of Josephus, and of the New Testament may discover. In the former treatise we find old Eleasar, while in Egypt, speaking of that prophet's deliverance from the lions' den; and of the escape of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego from the furnace, exactly as these facts are related in the treatise under review; while Josephus seems to prefer Daniel to all his brethren, and

both our Saviour and his contemporaries repeatedly quote him by name. Nor is this all; when Aquila the Jew published his version of the Hebrew Scriptures, for the express purpose of rendering the prophecies inapplicable to Jesus of Nazareth, he did not venture to keep back the Book of Daniel; and, as the quotations of Justin prove, even in his hands Daniel bore strong and satisfactory testimony to the very reverse of what the controversialist desired. In like manner it is absurd to contend that there was no copy of the Book of Daniel in the original version of the LXX. The very reverse must be the case, inasmuch as it was from that version that Daniel was publicly read in our Saviour's time; while Clemens Romanus, Jerome, and others of the earliest fathers, all quote from the Greek copy of Daniel as of the other prophets. But it may be said that the name of Daniel is omitted in the enumeration of the prophets recorded by Jesus the son of Sirach, in the Book of Ecclesiasticus. This is perfectly true: but if it have any weight at all, it bears equally against the existence in Jesus's time of the books of Job and Ezra, neither of which had a place in his catalogue; yet no one has ever pretended to doubt that the books of Job and Ezra are both of much older date than that of Ecclesiasticus. The truth however is, that on the Book of Ecclesiasticus no great dependence ought to be placed, compiled as it was by one man, and left to be arranged by another; more especially as the very language in which the larger portion of the Book of Daniel was written seems to have been unknown to the son of Sirach.

But are not many of the transactions related in the Book of Daniel highly incredible, such as his own preservation from the lions and the delivery of his friends from the furnace; while the readiness with which he interprets dreams for idolatrous princes accords but indifferently with our notions of prophetic dignity? We freely admit that the preservation of Daniel from the paw of the lion and of his three countrymen from the power of the flame was exceedingly wonderful; but we cannot regard either event as more wonderful than others which compel our assent in the Sacred Volume. Though miracles were by this time more rare than they had formerly been, they had by no means ceased entirely; and surely God's arm was not shorter in the captivity than in the wilderness. Again, it is

an error to suppose that Daniel descended from the dignity of his office by interpreting to Nebuchadnezzar his dreams. Nebuchadnezzar had been the subject of many prophecies, and was spoken of by other prophets as an instrument in the hands of the Most High; he was not less an instrument while trembling in the presence of a Jewish captive than when riding in triumph through Jerusalem or devastating Egypt. Nor does it at all derogate from the sanctity of Daniel's character, that he studied at the schools of the Chaldean magi, however gross their religious opinions might be. The knowledge which he acquired in natural science was probably great; and surely the most pious believer incurs no contamination by listening to an able lecture on chemistry or astronomy from the lips of an infidel. With respect again to the peculiar phraseology used by Daniel in speaking of the princes and sovereigns whom he served, the single observation which we deem it necessary to hazard is this: no scholar will seriously urge that as bearing against the authenticity of the Jewish narrative. It is well known that at least as great contrariety prevails between one profane writer and another, as between all or any of the inspired historians and Daniel, of which the case of the very Darius of whom we have last spoken furnishes an example. That prince, of whom Daniel speaks as Darius the Mede, is called by the Greeks Cyaxares, and by the Persians Fraiborz, yet no reader of history can doubt that the same individual is referred to by all parties; nay, if there be any thing in the matter at all, it is favourable to Daniel. The words Darius the Mede signify merely the victorious Mede, which was probably the appellation by which Cyaxares or Fraiborz was generally known among the natives whom his arms had subdued; but whether Cyaxares or Fraiborz was the true name of the man, we possess no means of ascertaining.

We will not occupy more of the reader's time by vindicating the sacred narration from other and less important objections urged against it by the captious. No impartial person can, we conceive, turn to the book itself without discovering abundant traces of the authority to which it appeals; while the pious will discern, as he goes along, how carefully and systematically the way was paved from generation to generation for the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER VIII.

Death of Cyrus—Consequences to the Jews—Darius Hystaspes favours them—Cambyzes equally friendly—Ezra leads a fresh Colony to Jerusalem—Ahasuerus and Mordecai—Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem—The Canon of the Old Testament completed—The Jewish Synagogue.

A. M. 4882.—B. C. 529.

It has been stated in the preceding chapter that very soon after the foundation of the second temple the Samaritans exerted themselves to throw impediments in the way of an undertaking in which they were not permitted to join. While Cyrus lived this could only be done covertly, to which the opportunities were more frequent in consequence of that monarch's warlike disposition and continual absence from his palace; but when in the year B. C. 529 the illustrious Persian expired, other and more effectual means seem to have been adopted to thwart the designs of the Jews. The successor of Cyrus was Cambyzes, a man stained with innumerable crimes, the murderer of his own brother, the husband of his own sister, and the violator of all the laws of conscience and honour, whose career, from first to last, marked him as an insane person, and whose end was clearly brought about by an especial interference of Divine Providence. As we are not writing a history of the great Asiatic empires, further than as the circumstances of these bear upon the history of the Jews, we must content ourselves by referring the reader who is curious as to Cambyzes's adventures to the invaluable pages of Herodotus. Cambyzes filled the throne of Persia and, as a necessary consequence, of Media and Babylon seven years and four months, during which time the building of the temple at Jerusalem was interrupted; and he was succeeded for seven months longer by an impostor named Smerdis, who equally with himself listened to the intrigues of the Samaritans. At last, however, it pleased God to raise to the throne Darius Hystaspes, a prince next to Cyrus the

most eminent of his line, who, discovering that Smerdis was not the brother of Cambyzes, the latter having been put to death several years previously, entered with other nobles into a conspiracy, and surprised and cut to pieces the Magian usurper.

How Darius himself acquired the crown we are not called upon to decide. If Herodotus be worthy of belief, he obtained it by the art of his groom, though it is more probable that he was indebted for his elevation to the high and commanding talents with which nature had gifted himself; but let this be as it may, one of his earliest edicts peremptorily prohibited any further interruption to the building of the temple. The work was in consequence resumed with fresh vigour, and in the sixth year of Darius's reign, B. C. 516, had advanced so far, that the performance of divine worship according to the ritual established by Solomon was again practicable.

Zerubbabel was still governor of Judea, as Jeshua B. C. 516. was high-priest, when the above act occurred, and they celebrated the feast of the passover in the new edifice with great joy and gladness on the fourteenth day of the month which saw its sanctuary prepared for the occasion; but their satisfaction received a sudden check, when the Samaritans, who had been commanded by the decree of Cyrus to devote the tribute exacted from the province to the purpose of building the temple, refused, on the plea that the edifice was complete, to continue the contribution any longer. The Jews were exceedingly mortified; but Zerubbabel being despatched to the court of Darius soon returned with a fresh command that the tribute should be continued as heretofore, till all the outworks were erected. In consequence of this the work went on smoothly, and long before Darius paid the debt of nature the second temple was finished.

We have said nothing of the numerous wars of Darius, because, memorable as these were, they bear but little upon Sacred History, and we shall not further supply the deficiency than by stating that he subdued Samos, retook Babylon, which had rebelled against him, and dismantled its fortifications; invaded Scythia, where he experienced heavy reverses; and carried on a severe and doubtful contest, both by sea and land, with Greece. But Darius was something

more than a mere warrior. He introduced into his empire an equitable and moderate system of taxation, administered just laws with firmness, yet with mercy; and in his religious opinions seems to have been, like the illustrious Cyrus, a pure theist. He was a contemporary of the second Zoroaster, of whose pupilage to the prophet Daniel there seems no reason to doubt; and who, so far from being a Zabean or an impostor, similar to Mohammed, was a worshipper of Jehovah, and a strenuous teacher of the pure patriarchal faith. Darius's end, however, was not so fortunate as the earlier part of his reign. After taking Athens he lost his fleet in a storm; his army was defeated by a sudden attack of the Thracians; and he died while busily employed in making preparations for a fresh invasion of European Greece. He was succeeded, in the year B. C. 485, by Xerxes, of whom little or no notice is taken in Scripture, but of whom prophecy relates, that he confirmed to the Jews all the privileges granted to them by his father. It was this prince who carried so prodigious a multitude across the Hellespont, and returned, after sustaining defeats by land and sea, in a solitary fishing-boat; matters in the highest degree interesting in themselves, but foreign from the object of our present undertaking. We must, therefore, content ourselves with stating, that after a reign of twenty-one years, the last of which were blackened with crimes of the deepest die, he perished by the dagger of the captain of his guards; resigning the crown to his son Artaxerxes Longimanus, the same who is mentioned in Scripture by the name of Ahasuerus.

In the mean while, the Jews under Zerubbabel and Jehoiachin, who succeeded Jeshua in the high-priesthood, began to repair the walls of Jerusalem, and they had made some progress in the undertaking, when the Egyptians venturing upon a revolt, the Samaritans made haste to report to

B. C. 463. Ahasuerus that their neighbours were erecting walls preparatory to forming a junction with the rebels.

In consequence of this rumour, the king forbade the city to be fortified, though he so far showed himself friendly to the Jews, that he commissioned Ezra, "the priest

B. C. 460. and scribe of the law of the most high God," to lead back to their own city such of his countrymen as chose to proceed thither, and he authorized him at the same

time to regulate entirely both the civil and religious affairs of the nation. About 1700 or 1800 persons, including Israelites of all tribes—priests, Levites, public characters, and the descendants of the Gibeonites who still adhered to them, followed Ezra on this occasion, who conducted them safely to the land of promise after a journey of four months' duration, and not devoid of danger.

On arriving in Judea, Ezra set himself busily to the accomplishment of the important task which God and the king had committed to him. In particular he turned his attention to the correction of a grievous abuse which had of late crept in, by the intermarriage of his countrymen with their heathen neighbours; and he prevailed upon them all, not excepting the sons of the high-priest, to promise a compliance with the Divine law by putting away their strange wives. It was not, however, reserved for Ezra to restore Jerusalem to its rank among the nations, which lay, during his administration, in a state of melancholy ruin.

While Ezra was thus employed, Ahasuerus engaged in desperate and doubtful war both with the Egyptian rebels and their allies the Athenians. Against the former he was completely successful; and though the latter defeated him on various occasions, he nevertheless so far crippled their strength that in the end they were well pleased to come to an accommodation; after which he retired to Susa or Shushan, where the following circumstances took place: The king, to celebrate his triumphs, gave a great feast to his nobles, and in the height of his intoxication required his queen, Vashti, to appear before his guests; but the latter, considering such a step derogatory to her honour as a female, refused to obey. Ahasuerus was too indignant at what he considered an encroachment upon his authority to make any allowance for the customs even of his own country; Vashti was forthwith deposed, and orders were issued for bringing in a certain number of the most beautiful virgins from the several provinces of the empire, that a successor might be chosen to fill the queenly station.

By far the loveliest of all the females introduced to the notice of the king's chief eunuch was a Jewish maiden, Hadassah, the niece of one Mordecai, who had gone into captivity with king Jehoiakim. This woman, to whom the Persians gave the name of Esther (a star), made so

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deep an impression on Ahasuerus, that he selected her, in preference to the rest, to be his wife, and having celebrated the nuptials with great pomp, continued ever after sincerely attached to her. For some time, however, the secret of her descent was carefully kept from him. The Jews appear, even in those days, to have held a degraded rank in the eyes of their neighbours, and Mordecai, fearful lest the discovery of her connexion with that despised people might injure her in the king's estimation, strictly forbade that mention should be made of the circumstance. For the same reason he abstained from making use of her influence to advance his own fortunes, contenting himself with an humble office which he happened previously to have held about the court; nay, to such an extent was the system of mystery carried, that though he was fortunate enough to detect a conspiracy against the king's life, which he communicated to Esther, he reaped no benefit from the service. His name, indeed, was honourably recorded in the Persian annals, but he himself obtained no increase either of wealth or of dignity.

There happened to be at this time among Ahasuerus's confidential servants an Amalekite, a descendant of King Agag, whom Samuel slew. This man, like other favourites of oriental princes, was in the habit of receiving the most abject flattery from those around him, and his fury rose to the highest pitch when he discovered that Mordecai could not be prevailed on to follow the example of the crowd. To sacrifice the guilty individual was not vengeance sufficient for such an affront as this. Haman determined to extirpate the entire nation of which Mordecai was a member, and, by dint of false representations and the promise of a rich spoil, he prevailed upon the king to pass a decree which doomed the Jews to universal destruction.

As soon as this tremendous edict became known, the Israelites were every where affected with the deepest sorrow, and Mordecai felt that the moment was now arrived when Esther's influence over her husband must be exerted for the good of her country. With the superstition peculiar to his family, Haman, who devised his plan in the first month of the year, had caused his astrologers to cast lots for the day which should prove most propitious for the massacre and the lot happening to fall upon the thirtieth of the last month, a considerable space was granted between the pro-

mulgation and execution of the decree. Of this Mordecai made good use, and he at last prevailed upon Esther, at the risk of her own life, to intercede with Ahasuerus for the lives of her brethren.

In eastern countries even the favourite wife of the monarch may not, on pain of death, intrude unbidden into the royal presence. Not without a full sense of the risk incurred, Esther ventured to set the prohibition at defiance, and coming one day into the great hall where the king sat upon his throne, surrounded by the chief officers of state, she fell down at his feet, and implored him to grant her a boon. Ahasuerus kindly raised her up, assured her of his pardon for the offence which she had just committed, and though somewhat surprised at the nature of the request, promised to attend that evening, with Haman his favourite, a banquet in her apartments. Nor was his astonishment lessened when in the evening she again confined her wishes to an entreaty that the same parties would honour her on the morrow as they had done already; nevertheless, he readily accepted the invitation, and the guests withdrew to their respective homes.

The pride of Haman received, as may be imagined, a ten-fold increase in consequence of the honours lately conferred upon him; and his rage against Mordecai became proportionably violent when that person refused even to salute him as he passed. He hastened to his house, and at the suggestion of the members of his family, caused a lofty gibbet to be erected, with the design of suspending upon it the dead-body of his enemy as soon as the dawn should appear. But before he could carry his intention into effect he was summoned to the presence of the king, who had just finished a perusal of the annals of the empire, and was in the act of accusing himself of inattention to his duty in having failed adequately to honour some person to whom he was indebted for important services. Haman, nothing doubting that he was himself the individual to whom the king alluded, advised that the highest marks of royal approbation should be bestowed upon the trusty servant; and his mortification knew no bounds when he received the royal command to see his own suggestions realized in favour of Mordecai. But the performance of this task, irksome as it was, proved but the commencement of his troubles. When

the hour of the queen's banquet arrived, she availed herself of the occurrences of the morning to plead the cause of her persecuted kindred; and she laid open the treachery of Haman so effectually that the king saw in a moment into his designs. The result was that Haman himself suffered the fate which he had intended for Mordecai; his children were sold as slaves, his house razed to the ground, and as the austere laws of the Medes and Persians admitted of no repeal, a counter decree was issued authorizing the Jews every where to defend themselves. This they did with so much vigour, that instead of falling by the swords of their enemies, they slew throughout the provinces upwards of seventy-five thousand of those who attacked them; nor did a great while elapse ere fresh proofs of the king's good-will were exhibited towards them.

It has been stated some time ago, that though Ahasuerus sanctioned the return of Ezra to his own country, and permitted the introduction of numerous reforms into the administration of its laws and religion, he nevertheless prohibited the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, or the restoration of that city to its former condition. Soon after the date of Haman's judicial punishment, events befell which induced him to pursue a different policy. Among other articles in the treaty of peace which he had concluded with the Athenians, it was stipulated that the Greek cities throughout Asia should be free, and enjoy their own laws; that no Persian governor of the provinces should come with an army within three days' journey of any part of the seacoast; and that no Persian ships of war should sail between the northern extremity of Asia Minor and the boundary of Palestine. Thus shut out from the whole line of seacoast, and precluded from keeping garrisons in any of the maritime towns, it became to the Persian monarch an object of the first importance to conciliate the Jews; while the situation of Jerusalem, within three days' march of the sea, and commanding the line of communication between Persia and Egypt, rendered it peculiarly eligible as a sort of depôt for the imperial arms in that quarter. On this account not less than through the entreaties of Esther, Ahasuerus in the twentieth year of his reign came to the resolution of repairing the ramparts of the Jewish capital; and as Zerubbabel, the governor, was then dead, he determined to

intrust the delicate task to a person in whom he knew that he might repose unbounded confidence.

B. C. The individual chosen to gratify his countrymen,
444. at the hazard of giving serious umbrage to the nations around, was Nehemiah; a person of singular piety, of an illustrious family, and cupbearer to Ahasuerus. With extraordinary perseverance and great address, Nehemiah applied himself to the task. He was ably seconded in every thing by Ezra and others, but they had not proceeded far when the Moabites and Ammonites under Sanballat and Tobiah opposed them, at first by ridicule and guile, and latterly by violence. Among other stratagems, the assassination of Nehemiah was agreed upon, which Shimeah, an unworthy priest, promised to perpetrate in the very holy of holies; but finding that Nehemiah was neither to be intimidated nor deceived into an abandonment of his post, they resolved to make an appeal to arms. Nehemiah was not slow in meeting them here as well as elsewhere. He caused strong armed parties to protect the artisans, each of whom had also his weapons at hand, and presented so determined a countenance that the enemy were afraid to run the hazard of an assault. By these means he completed within the space of fifty-two days the repairs of the ramparts, towers, and gates, which were solemnly dedicated, according to the practice of the times, by processions and vocal and instrumental music.

Having thus restored the external splendour of the city, and provided for its security against foreign enemies, Nehemiah turned his attention to the correction of numerous errors in the habits and manners of the people. He abolished a practice which had lately sprung up of exacting usurious interest upon debts, and caused the rich, upon the return of the jubilee, to restore to freedom the sons and daughters of their poorer brethren whom they had enslaved. He not only declined to levy taxes, a proceeding which, as governor, he might have followed, but offered a noble example of liberality to others by maintaining at his own cost numbers of his countrymen. He set his face likewise against strange marriages, which, in spite of the exertions of Ezra had begun again to prevail, and he celebrated the public festivals of the Jewish church with a degree of magnificence unknown in modern times. But the

most memorable of the transactions for which Nehemiah's government is famous, was the settlement of the canon of Scripture, and the reading aloud of the whole of the sacred volume to the people by Ezra. During several years previously, that illustrious scribe had been employed in collecting together as many copies of the different books as he could procure. These he carefully compared one with another, correcting such errors as had crept into the sacred text through the negligence or ignorance of transcribers; and, disposing them in their proper order, made up the volume which we now call the Bible. To this edition Ezra, who acted under the guidance of the same spirit which directed the original writers, added such sentences, or parts of sentences, as appeared necessary to illustrate or connect the several books one with another; while by substituting for the old and obsolete names of places such names as they bore in his own day, he brought down the tenor of the Sacred History to the level of every capacity. Finally, he wrote out the whole in the Chaldee character, with which, in consequence of their protracted sojourn in Babylon, the Jews were now much better acquainted than with the ancient Hebrew, and thus placed them, as it were, within the reach of all classes of his countrymen. Nor did Ezra's pious exertions end here. To him the Jewish nation was indebted for the erection of synagogues in all cities and villages, whither, on every Sabbath and other holy days, the people were accustomed to repair for the purposes of worship and instruction; and in which portions of the law and of the prophets were periodically read by the Levites qualified by their learning for the task.

A great and glorious epoch was that in Jewish history when Ezra, at the request of the governor and people, produced his edition of the Scriptures, and, aided by a certain number of learned scribes, publicly read them to the congregation. The effect of this solemn service was, for the time at least, very striking. The people confessed their sins with the greatest humility; implored God's pardon; and readily entered into a solemn covenant that they would live henceforth in strict obedience to the law; to which, after it had been engrossed upon parchment, their princes voluntarily set their hands. But Nehemiah, whose commission authorized him to preside over the affairs of Judea

only for a limited time, no sooner returned to Babylon, than the faithless Jews relapsed into many of their former errors. The Sabbath was again violated; impure marriages were again contracted, in which the new high-priest, Eliashib (Johoeahash having died B. C. 453), set the example; and the very house of God itself received pollution, by the admission of Tobiah, the Ammonite, the bitterest enemy of the Jewish nation, to a dwelling within its walls. As a matter of course, divine worship was celebrated with great negligence and irregularity, while the Levites and singers were driven to seek in the country that maintenance which was denied them in the city.

Such was the state of things when Nehemiah received a new commission from the king, and returned in the capacity of governor for life to the land of his fathers. He was grievously shocked at the aspect which every department of public and private life bore; but ably assisted by the prophet Malachi, he again applied himself to the correction of abuses. His first measure was to cause the law to be read again in the ears of the people; who were so much struck with the denunciation that an Ammonite or a Moabite should not come into the congregation, unto the tenth generation for ever, that they readily gave their assistance in ejecting both Tobiah and his favourites from the temple. His next step was to bring back the celebration of divine worship to its due order, and to drive away the strangers who sold fish or other commodities on the Sabbath-day; after which he persuaded them to enforce the law against heathen marriages, no matter by whom contracted. It happened that Eliashib, being then high-priest, died about this time, and was succeeded by Joiada or Judas, whose son Manasseh had taken to wife the daughter of Sanballat the Cushite, governor of Samaria. Even him, on his refusing to abandon his wife, Nehemiah banished the city; and the young man, retiring to the house of his father-in-law, became, some years afterward, high-priest of a temple which Sanballat built on Mount Gerizim, in imitation of that at Jerusalem.

In this manner Nehemiah employed himself during many years, with a zeal worthy of the cause in which he was engaged. How long his government lasted, we possess no means accurately to decide, further than that we find him

in power up to the fifteenth year of the reign of Darius Nothus; but whether he or that monarch first paid the debt of nature we cannot tell. Nehemiah had among his contemporaries, besides Ezra the scribe, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; the last of whom predicted, in remarkably explicit terms, the circumstances which should precede and attend the coming of the Messiah; and he died, according to the tradition of the rabbins, at the very advanced age of one hundred and thirty years.

We are not aware that the preceding chapter contains so much as a single statement against the credibility of which any fair or candid objection may be urged. Of the infidel argument which would attribute to Ezra the invention of those Scriptures which he is acknowledged to have collected and arranged into a volume, sufficient notice has, we think, been taken in the Introduction to this work; and of the other details, it only remains to observe, that they, one and all, rest upon the surest ground of historical evidence. Instead, therefore, of wasting the reader's time by the discussion of points which no discussion could render more clear or intelligible than they are already, we shall content ourselves with transcribing from the pages of an industrious commentator his account of the institution of synagogue-worship; the subject being closely connected with that portion of sacred history which comprehends the annals of our Redeemer and his first disciples. "After Ezra," says Stackhouse, "had set forth a correct edition of the law, the prophets, and other sacred writings that were extant in his time, his next care was to appoint proper persons, namely, the most learned of the Levites, and other scribes that were well skilled in these writings, to read and expound them to his people. This, no doubt, they at first did in the same manner that himself had done; i. e. by getting the people together in some wide street, or open place of the city, that was of the fittest capacity to receive them. But in the wet and winter seasons of the year the inconvenience of this came to be felt, so that in process of time they erected houses and tabernacles wherein to meet for this purpose; and this was the true cause and origin of such edifices in Judea."

"Synagogues were public edifices, situated either within or without their city, and generally in an elevated place.

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They were usually raised above any private house (except where there was an interdiction from the civil power), because the Jews have a notion that it is a dishonour to God to have his house inferior, nay, so much as equal, to those of men; and in whatever city this happens, they threaten it with a speedy destruction. They are always roofed and covered over; and by this means distinguished from the *proscuchie* (or places of prayer) which are common in the fields, and open to the heavens. In the midst of them is a desk or pulpit, made very probably in imitation of that which, as we read, Ezra made use of, from whence the book or roll of the law is read very solemnly, and from whence both he that expounds it, and he that preaches to the congregation at any time, always delivers himself, at the upper end of the synagogue; and over against the door, which ever stands to the west, there is a chest, or press, wherein the book of the law is kept, wrapped in a fine embroidered cloth, and (what is uncommon in our churches) the women are separated from the men, and seated in a gallery enclosed with lattices.

"Every town in which there were ten *batelnim*, i. e. ten persons of full age and free condition, always at leisure on week-days, as well as on Sabbaths, to attend on divine service, was thought large enough to have a synagogue built in itself, otherwise it was not; because the Jewish notion is, that less than such a number could not make a congregation, and without a congregation no part of the synagogue service could be performed. But as their notion was, further, that any person, gentile as well as Jew, might be permitted to erect a synagogue, because the holiness of the place, as they thought, consisted not so much in the fabric, as in its being set apart and dedicated to holy uses; it thence came to pass, that though there were but few at first, yet in process of time they became so numerous that in our Saviour's time there was no town in Judea but what had one or more in it; that in Tiberias, a city of Galilee, there were no less than twelve; and (if we may credit the Jews) four hundred and eighty in Jerusalem. The buildings were constructed much after the manner of our parish churches; had over the door or entrance this inscription written, 'This is the gate of the Lord! the righteous shall enter into it;' and upon the walls within were there such

like sentences, 'Remember thy Creator;' 'Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of the Lord;' 'Silence is commendable in time of prayer;' and 'Prayers without attention are like a body without a soul.' In the synagogue-service, the first office was prayer: their prayers at first were but very few, but have since increased to a very large bulk, which makes the synagogue-service very long and tedious. What they reckon the most solemn part of the prayers are those which they call *Shemoneh Eshreth*, i. e. the eighteen prayers which, according to them, were composed and instituted by Ezra and the great synagogue; and therefore they enjoin all that are at age, of what sex or condition soever, either in private or public, to repeat them three times a day, and on every synagogue-day they offer them up with the greatest solemnity in the public assemblies. These prayers, however, are but of the same nature as the Lord's Prayer in our public service, i. e. the fundamental and principal part; for besides these, they have some prayers going before, some following after, and others interspersed between them, which makes their liturgies very tedious, and justifies our Saviour's finding fault with their long prayers.

"In the synagogue-service there are three things that are read, the Shema, the Law, and the Prophets. The Shema consists of three portions of Scripture: the first is from the beginning of the fourth verse of the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy to the end of the ninth verse; the second, from the beginning of the thirteenth verse of the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy to the end of the twenty-first verse; and the third, from the beginning of the thirty-seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of Numbers to the end of the chapter. And because the first of these portions in the Hebrew Bible begins with the word *Shema*, i. e. *hear*, the reading of the whole is called the reading of the Shema; which, next to their saying of the *Shemoneh Eshreth*, or the famous eighteen prayers, is reckoned the most solemn part of their religious service. The five books of the law were divided, as some say by Moses himself, into fifty-four sections, because in their intercalated years (when a month was added to the year), there were fifty-four Sabbaths, and so a section being read every Sabbath-day, completed the whole in the space of a year; but when the year was not

thus intercalated, those who had the direction of the synagogue-worship reduced the sections to the number of Sabbaths, by joining two short ones several times into one; because they held themselves obliged to have the law, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy, read over in this manner every year.

"In the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes when the reading of the law was prohibited, in the room of the fifty-four sections of it the Jews substituted fifty-four sections of the prophets, which were ever after continued; inasmuch that when the reading of the law was again restored by the Maccabees, the section which was read every Sabbath out of the law served for the first lesson, and the section out of the prophets for the second, for that is the meaning of St. Paul standing up to preach after the reading of the law and the prophets; i. e. after the first lesson out of the law and the second lesson out of the prophets. "The exposition of the law and the prophets went along with the reading of them; for after that the Hebrew language had ceased to be the mother-tongue of the Jews, and the Chaldee grew up into use instead of it, the custom of the synagogue was that one should first read a paragraph of the Scripture to the people in the Hebrew tongue, and then another interpreted it in the Chaldee, which they better understood. And this seems to suggest the reason why these sections of Scripture came to be divided into verses, viz. that by this means the reader might certainly know how much he was to read, and the interpreter how much he was to interpret at every interval."

"After that the reading and expounding were over, any person of learning and knowledge in the Scriptures might address himself to the people upon what moral or divine subject he thought proper; only we may observe that this was a compliment usually paid to strangers; and therefore, when St. Paul and his company came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the place of Divine worship on the Sabbath-day, 'after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation to the people, say on.' From what has been said it appears that ministrations of the synagogue-service was not confined to the sacerdotal order; for the priests were consecrated only

to the service of the temple, which was widely different from this, as consisting chiefly in the offering up of sacrifices and oblations ; but to this in the synagogue any one that by learning was qualified for it was admitted."

"The first of the kind are those whom the Scriptures in the New Testament call *Archisynagogi*, rulers of the synagogue ; but how many of these belonged to each synagogue we cannot tell, because they are mentioned in the plural number in respect of the same synagogue. Next to them (and perhaps one of them) was the minister of the synagogue, whose business it was to offer up to God the public prayers of the congregation ; and being for this purpose delegated, as it were, by them to God, is therefore in the Hebrew language called *Shalliach Zibba*, i. e. the angel of the church or congregation ; from whence the name of the bishops of the seven churches mentioned in the Revelations is manifestly borrowed. Next to this angel of the church were the deacons and inferior ministers of the synagogue, called in the Hebrew *Chazanim*, or overseers, who were the rulers of the synagogue, had the charge and oversight of all things in it, and kept the books of the Holy Scriptures, the liturgies, and utensils, which they brought forth and carried away again as there was occasion. And next to these overseers was the interpreter, whose office it was to recite in Chaldee the lessons (as they were read in Hebrew) to the congregation ; and because a great deal of skill in both languages was requisite for such an undertaking, whenever the rulers of the synagogue found a person fit for this purpose they maintained him by a salary, and so made him a standing minister among them."

We need only add to this account that the constitution of synagogues, from whatever cause it might arise, proved of the greatest service to the Jews after their captivity. Many instances of partial apostacy occurred, it is true, to the last ; but the people at large, being thus regularly instructed in the law, ceased to look with an eye of favour upon idolatry ; and more than once suffered grievous persecutions rather than renounce the religion of their ancestors

CHAPTER IX.

General View of the State of Asia Minor and Egypt, during the Interval between the Death of Nehemiah and the Birth of Christ.

B. C. 420.

WITH the reforms introduced by Nehemiah into the administration of the affairs of Judea ends what in strict propriety of speech deserves to be styled the History of the Old Testament, to connect which with the events immediately preceding the introduction of Christianity into the world belongs rather to the chronicler of the Hebrews as a nation than to the biblical historian. Nevertheless, that our readers may obtain a more accurate understanding of that stupendous scheme which restored to fallen man his forfeited immortality, we will endeavour in this chapter, with as much perspicuity as our narrow limits will permit, to describe the principal occurrences, civil as well as religious, which took place in Judea and the countries intimately connected with it, between the close of Nehemiah's government and the birth of the Redeemer.

While Nehemiah was ably discharging his duty as civil governor of Judea the imperial crown became the prize of more than one bold usurper, passing within the space of eight months from Xerxes to Sogdianus, and from Sogdianus to Ochus, who thenceforth assumed the name of Darius Nothus. These were all the sons of Ahasuerus, the two former only being legitimate; but Xerxes having been murdered by Sogdianus, Ochus under pretence of avenging his brother's death slew him in his turn and seized the throne. His reign, which began B. C. 423, and lasted till 404, was turbulent and uneasy. The Egyptians revolted from him and maintained their independence; he involved himself rashly and unwisely in the affairs of Greece by assisting the Lacedæmonians to crush the strength of Athens; and he was compelled to put to death his own brother in consequence of his heading a rebellion, which was not suppressed without difficulty. He swayed the

sceptre in all nineteen years, and was succeeded by his son Arsaces, or Artaxerxes Mnemon. Artaxerxes had scarcely mounted the throne when his brother Cyrus conspired against him, and that short but memorable war began of which Xenophon in his *Anabasis* gives an account. Cyrus was slain, but a body of Greek auxiliaries, returning in good order through the whole extent of the Persian empire, carried back with them a thorough knowledge of the weakness of their rivals and of their own strength. This was further demonstrated in the course of two campaigns in which Agesilaus, King of Sparta, commanded, till Artaxerxes taught by experience that his gold was more influential than his soldiers, raised Athens from her depression, and set her up again as a rival to Sparta. The disgraceful peace of Antalcidas followed, which gave up to the Persian crown the whole of the Greek settlements in Asia Minor, while the republics in Europe with increased fury turned their arms one against the other.

Artaxerxes, after subduing Cyprus, made an inroad into the mountainous tracts on the north of Media without success, and was equally unfortunate in his attempt to reduce Egypt. His latter days were moreover embittered by domestic broils, and he died broken-hearted at the age of ninety-four, leaving the crown to his son Ochus, otherwise called Dorab.

The land of Judea, and indeed the whole of Palestine, was, in the mean while, the scene of certain transactions, all of them more or less intimately connected with the great consummation to which the call of Abraham and the election of his descendants were the prelude.

Conspicuous among these was the erection of a temple in Mount Gerizim by Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, to the high-priesthood of which Manasseh, the Jewish exile of whom we have spoken, was appointed; and the substitution, among the heterogeneous race that passed under the general title of Samaritans, of the pure worship of Jehovah for the religion which they had heretofore cultivated. Between the Jews and Samaritans there had ever subsisted a feeling of excessive jealousy, if not of aversion; it was now inflamed into rancorous hatred in consequence of the disputes which thenceforth arose as to the comparative holiness of the rival temples. Nor was this the only ground

of disagreement between them. While the Jews acknowledged as canonical the Scriptures as they had been arranged by Ezra, and paid by degrees too much respect to the traditions of the elders, the Samaritans resolutely denied the authority of all except the five books of Moses; and the two people hated one another, in consequence, with a degree of bitterness of which it is not easy for us to form a conception.

After the demise of Nehemiah, Judea ceased to be honoured with the presence of a civil ruler immediately appointed by the Persian crown. It was annexed to the province of Cælo-Syria, and the administration of Jewish affairs was left to the high-priest, though still subject to the control of the provincial governors. This circumstance naturally gave to the priestly office a value which it had not hitherto possessed; and men began to aim at it, as in other countries they aimed at the crown and sceptre. It happened that during the reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon, one Johanan, the grandson of Eliashib, wore the mitre, while his brother, who envied him the distinction, made interest with Bagoses, the Persian governor, to supplant him. A violent contest ensued, in the course of which Jesus, the claimant, was slain by his relative within the precincts of the sanctuary itself; which so provoked the Persian governor that he levied a heavy fine upon every victim offered from thenceforth as a burnt-sacrifice.

It has been stated that Artaxerxes Mnemon died at a very advanced age, and was succeeded by his son Ochus or Dorab I. This prince, who waded to supreme power through the blood of his nearest kindred, soon became involved in numerous wars, for the Cyprians, Phœnicians, and the Jews all revolted and joined the Egyptians, who still struggled for independence. Dorab inflicted upon most of them a tremendous punishment. Sidon he reduced to ashes, Egypt he totally conquered, and Judea he humbled by the capture of Jericho, and the removal of a number of its inhabitants as slaves into other provinces. But the most remarkable event in his reign was his embassy to Philip of Macedon, of whose preparations to invade Persia he was even then made aware; but whom first the state of Greece, and finally the grasp of death, prevented from carrying his well-laid plans into execution. Nor did the storm, which a

hand more vigorous even than Philip's was destined to guide, burst upon the Asiatic empire during Dorab's day, who was poisoned, the twenty-first year from his accession, by Bagoas an Egyptian eunuch, in revenge for the calamities brought upon his country.

We pass over the short reign of Arses, which, commencing B. C. 337, ended in 335, as well as the early transactions that took place under Darius Codomannus. While the former of these princes swayed the sceptre, and during the first years of the latter, things went on in Judea with sufficient regularity under the high-priest Jaddus, who attained the mitre on the demise of Jonathan, B. C. 341. But in the year 332, Alexander the Great, victorious over his rival in many battles, and enraged because the Jews remained faithful to Darius, while he was encumbered with the siege of Tyre, advanced upon Jerusalem with hasty strides. The inhabitants of that city entertained no hope of being able successfully to resist a warrior before whom the might of the Persian empire had given way: so they commissioned the high-priest to throw himself and them on the mercy of the conqueror. Jaddus accordingly put himself at the head of a procession of priests, arrayed in the full splendour of the sacerdotal robes; and, walking forth to meet Alexander, not only obtained the pardon of his countrymen, but received striking marks of respect from the haughty Macedonian. Alexander alighted from his chariot as soon as the priests appeared, saluted them in the humblest manner, and adored the great God whose name was inscribed on the front of the mitre; declaring that his successes were entirely owing to Jehovah, who had encouraged him long ago by a vision of the very persons now before him to undertake the war. Alexander was conducted into Jerusalem with great pomp, where the prophecies of Daniel respecting his own success were shown to him, with which he was so much gratified, that he not only permitted the Jews to live according to their own laws and religion, but granted them an exemption, as often as the sabbatical year returned, from the payment of all tribute to the Persian crown.

The privileges bestowed upon the Jews excited, as was to be expected, the envy of the Samaritans, who, in imitation of their rivals, entreated him to honour their city also with a visit and to bestow upon them the same immunities

which he had bestowed upon the people of Judea. Alexander, who was then on his march into Egypt, declined at that moment to accede to the request, though he promised to take their claims into mature consideration as soon as he should return; but the Samaritans, by their own rashness, incurred his heaviest displeasure, and instead of favour drew down upon themselves a tremendous punishment. In a transport of popular indignation they murdered Andromachus, whom Alexander had left behind as governor of Syria and Palestine; and they were in consequence driven into exile, their city assigned to a Macedonian colony, and their territories given to the Jews.

While Alexander was pursuing his career of glory, the Jews enjoyed a state of profound tranquillity; but when, in the year 324, the mighty conqueror died, Palestine, like other provinces of his overgrown empire, became for a time the scene of bloodshed and strife. At the first partition among the Macedonian generals the provinces of Cœlo-Syria, Phœnicia, and Judea were allotted to Laomedon, and they were confirmed to him on the second further partition; but Ptolemy Lagus, to whom Egypt had fallen, invaded them with a great army; and in the year B. C. 322 laid siege to Jerusalem. The place, which held out with great vigour, was carried at last through the superstition of its governor, who refused so much as to defend the works on the Sabbath-day, and Ptolemy was disposed to treat it for a season with excessive rigour. He beat down the walls, removed upwards of a hundred thousand of the people to Alexandria, the new capital of Egypt; but repenting of this severity, he afterward restored to the Jews their privileges and behaved towards them with marked kindness. Ptolemy was not, however, permitted to retain possession of his conquest unmolested. The restless and ambitious Antigonus disputed with him the territory of Judea, of which he obtained the temporary superiority in 312; but being totally defeated some years afterward by the united forces of Seleucus and Lysimachus, Ptolemy quietly recovered the province, which he highly valued.

During the progress of these revolutions the high-priest's mitre had passed, in 321, to Onias, from whom, in 300, it devolved upon Simon the Just, one of the most admirable characters of whom mention is

made in these latter days of the Jewish republic. Under his superintendence the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Esther, and the prophecies of Malachi were added to the canon of Scripture; while to a work not less important, either in its immediate or remote consequences, his son Eleazar, who succeeded in 291, was mainly instrumental. The work to which we allude was the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the son and successor of Ptolemy Lagus on the throne of Egypt. It was accomplished by seventy-two of the most learned of the scribes, selected by the high-priest for the purpose; on which account it received the title of the Septuagint, and it was deposited in the noble library at Alexandria, according to Usher, B. C. 278.

During the pontificate of Manasse's which endured from 276 to 250, nothing occurred in Judea particularly deserving of notice. The several kingdoms into which Alexander's empire had been divided waged indeed frequent wars one with another; but in these the Jews as a nation took no part. They remained steadily attached to the crown of Egypt under Ptolemy Euergetes, the son of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who succeeded his father B. C. 247, and was contemporary with the high-priest Onias II. Whether this person was the son of Simon the Just, or of Eleazar the predecessor of Manasses, chroniclers are not decided; but whatever his exact lineage might be, his avarice and embezzlement of the tribute due to the Egyptian treasury had well nigh brought upon his country a fresh captivity. Euergetes had already ordered an army against Judea, with instructions to confiscate the land and reduce the inhabitants to slavery, when Joseph the high-priest's son nobly interfered to avert the threatened calamity. Upon his own credit he borrowed the sum necessary to pay up the tribute in arrear; and so ingratiated himself into the good-will of the sovereign that he was appointed farmer-general of the revenues of Cælo-Syria, Phœnicia, Salmone, and Judea. He held his office under Euergetes, Philopater, and Ptolemy Epiphanes, till the latter lost the provinces altogether to Antiochus the Great.

Ptolemy Euergetes died, and was succeeded by his son Ptolemy Philopater, between whom and Antiochus the Great a furious contest was carried on.

B. C.
222.

The latter, next after Alexander, and perhaps Seleucus, the most powerful of the Macedo-Grecian monarchs, after recovering almost all Asia Minor, Media, Persia, and Babylonia, which his predecessor had lost, was defeated by Philopater in a great battle at Raphia, near Gaza, while endeavouring to subjugate Cælo-Syria and Phœnicia to the crown of Syria. Had Philopater followed up his victory with promptitude nothing could have saved Antiochus from ruin ; but overreached in diplomacy by the Syrian monarch, he imprudently made peace. Nor were his future proceedings marked by greater wisdom. Having visited Jerusalem in the course of a progress which he made through the chief cities of Cælo-Syria, he insisted upon taking a survey of the interior of the holy of holies, and proceeded to force his way thither in spite of the earnest entreaties of the priests that he would respect the sanctity of the place. He failed, however, in attaining his end ; for while he was passing through the inner court of the temple a sudden tremor seized him, and he was carried out by his servants in a state of insensibility. Philopater did not fail to take ample vengeance upon the Jews for the repulse which he met with in the temple. He published a decree that worship should be offered to no other gods besides those authorized at court ; and he cruelly persecuted the Jews, who, with a firm and honourable perseverance, refused to intermit their duty to Jehovah.

This monster of cruelty and profligacy of every kind died B. C. 205, and was succeeded on the throne by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child of five years old. During the minority of that prince an alliance was entered into between Antiochus the Great and Philip King of Macedon, which led to the conquest of Phœnicia, Cælo-Syria, and Judea, by the former of these monarchs ; a change highly relished by the Jews, to whom the Egyptian yoke had become odious, and rendered still more acceptable in consequence of the respect with which their new master treated them. He not only forbade all strangers to enter the temple, a decree peculiarly acceptable after the late proceeding of Philopater ; but in proof of the confidence which he reposed in them, he colonized Lydia, Phrygia, and other seacoasts of doubtful fidelity, with Jews from Babylonia as well as Palestine ; from whom were descended the multitudes of Israelites scattered through those regions at the

first preaching of the gospel. But Antiochus was not long permitted to enjoy the triumphs which he had won. Jealous of the growing power of the Roman republic, he declared war against it, which he prosecuted not according to the sage advice of Hannibal; and, being deserted by his ally Philip, he was defeated in numerous battles, and compelled to make peace on the most degrading terms. The close of Antiochus's career was as striking as it was equitable. He perished at last by the hands of the populace, while endeavouring to plunder the temple of Jupiter Belus, at Elymais in Persia, and left the crown of Syria to his son Seleucus Philopater, in the year B. C. 187.*

While these changes took place elsewhere, the high-priesthood was held from 250 to 217 B. C. by Onias II., and from 219 to 195 by Simon II. At the last-mentioned era Onias III. obtained the mitre, during whose administration Seleucus Philopater succeeded to the throne of Syria; a prince who at first seemed disposed to treat the Jews with equity and even with kindness. It is recorded to his honour, as well as to the honour of the high-priest, that "the holy city was inhabited with all peace, and the laws were kept very well, because of the godliness of Onias the high-priest, and his hatred of wickedness:" while "Seleucus himself, out of his own revenues, bare all the costs belonging to the service of the sacrifices."† But there was at this time one Simon, the governor of the temple at Jerusalem, who had a quarrel with Onias, and who, to indulge his evil humour, made a report to the king that an immense treasure was laid up within its walls. Seleucus was poor, and the Roman tribute pressed heavily upon him: he could not resist the temptation of seizing this wealth; and he despatched his general-in-chief, Heliodorus, to carry it away. But the impious Syrian was encountered by an apparition, which drove him with heavy blows from the

* We have taken Polybius for our guide in this narration, in preference to Jerome, Appian, and Josephus, who contend that Judea was reannexed to the crown of Egypt in consequence of the marriage of Cleopatra, Antiochus's daughter, with Ptolemy Epiphanes. There is no doubt that Antiochus pledged himself to give, as the young queen's dower, not only Judea, but the whole of Coelo-Syria and Palestine; but that he ever fulfilled his agreement is extremely doubtful. Had he done so, it not probable that Judea would have passed again to the crown of Syria under the reign of Antiochus's immediate successor.

† 2 Macc. iii. 1-3.

sanctuary, and he recovered from the effects only in consequence of the high-priest's prayers that God would restore him.

No great while elapsed after the above sacrilegious attempt ere Seleucus was murdered by this very Heliodorus, who seized the crown, and for a short time wore it; but being expelled by Eumenes, King of Pergamus, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, mounted the throne B. C. 175. He was the brother of Seleucus, and had spent his early youth in Rome, whither he was sent by his father, Antiochus the Great, as a hostage; but he contrived latterly to obtain his release by substituting his nephew Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, in his stead.

Antiochus Epiphanes was by far the most cruel persecutor under whose authority the Jews had yet fallen. He made open traffic of the high-priesthood, deposing the righteous Onias, and selling the office first to Jason and afterward to Menelaus; the latter of whom plundered the temple of many of its golden vessels in order to perform his impious orgies. Nor did his guilt end there: he bribed Andronicus, the king's representative at Antioch, whither Onias had retired, to murder that excellent person, because he had presumed to lift up his voice against the enormities of which the new high-priest had been guilty. For this offence the governor of Antioch was justly put to death; yet such was the influence of money that Menelaus, the projector of the crime, not only escaped punishment, but was confirmed in his office as high-priest.

These matters were yet in progress when circumstances occurred to draw Antiochus into a war with the rival kingdom of Egypt. Ptolemy, surnamed Philometer, the nephew of Antiochus by his sister Cleopatra, having mounted the throne in 171, renewed the pretensions of the kings of Egypt to the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine; and the Syrian monarch, the more effectually to resist the claim, invaded his country with a large army. Antiochus was completely successful, making Ptolemy prisoner, and subjugating the whole of Egypt as far as the gates of Alexandria; but in the mean while disturbances broke out in Judea, which gave him for the moment serious uneasiness. It has been stated that Menelaus, by outbidding his brother Jason, obtained possession of the dignity which he now

unworthily held. The latter, unable to resist the superior influence of Menelaus, retired into the country of the Ammonites, where he quietly waited for a convenient opportunity of reasserting his rights and imagining that, through the absence of the king on the Egyptian expedition, the long-wished-for moment had arrived, he put himself at the head of an armed force, and entered Jerusalem. The city was for a time the scene of cruel and desperate strife; till Antiochus, alarmed by a report that Judea was in rebellion, hurried thither with a powerful army. Unfortunately for the Jews, a rumour had previously reached them that Antiochus was slain in battle; and, as they had no cause to love the tyrant, they exhibited great joy on the occasion; but their joy was soon changed into bitter mourning, when the tyrant himself appeared among them, not so much to quell their seditions, as to take vengeance of the insult to which he had been subjected. A terrible persecution ensued. The holy of holies was polluted; a large sow was offered upon the altar of sacrifice, with the blood of which the entire temple was sprinkled; all the sacred implements were removed, the city was plundered, and upwards of eighty thousand persons put to the sword. But this was no more than the commencement of troubles, which, in the end, drove the Jews to despair and rebellion. Some years after, Antiochus being checked in another expedition against Egypt by the interference of an ambassador from Rome, vented his fury upon Jerusalem, against which he sent his general Apollonius with an army, who massacred many thousands of men while employed on the Sabbath at their devotions, and carried away the women and children to be sold as slaves. This was followed by a decree prohibiting the circumcision of children, and commanding, on pain of death by torture, the gods of Greece to be worshipped; and all who were found guilty of disobeying the edict suffered the fate awarded. Among others, a woman named Salomona, with seven sons, perished miserably rather than renounce their God; and the people were driven for shelter from the towns and cities to the woods and caves among the mountains.

At this momentous crisis, the standard of revolt was suddenly raised by Matthias, a priest of the family of Asame-neus, a noble race lineally descended from Phinehas, the

son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron. This man being followed to his retreat at Modim, a retired place in the tribe of Dan, was commanded by Apelles, the king's deputy, to abjure Jehovah ; but instead of complying, he seized a weapon, and slew on the spot a fellow-countryman while in the act of worshipping an idol. The spirit of resistance soon spread to no inconsiderable number of the spectators, Matthias's five sons, Johanan, Simon, Judas, Chozar, and Jonathan, setting the example ; the people rushed upon Apelles and his attendants, and with loud shouts put them to death ; after which they followed Matthias in great numbers to the mountains, and a war of extermination began.

For rather more than a year Matthias headed the patriots, who, having overcome the prejudice which at first prevented them from giving battle on the Sabbath-day, gained many and brilliant successes. He was succeeded at his demise by his son Judas, surnamed Maccabeus, one of the noblest characters in Jewish history ; under whom the faithful followers of God performed prodigies of valour. Apollonius, governor of Judea, and Seron, deputy of Cælo-Syria, each sustained a signal defeat ; while Ptolemy Macron, Nicanor, and Gorgias, three of the king's most distinguished generals, were one after another totally routed. The towns of Judea, likewise, fell in succession into his hands ; and as they submitted were purged from idolatrous altars, till Jerusalem itself was recovered, and the worship of the true God restored. One fortress only, situated upon Mount Acra, which from its position commanded the temple, held out : to it Judas laid close siege ; but finding that he could not spare troops enough to maintain the blockade, he contented himself with throwing up strong works about the temple, which thenceforth acted as a check upon the governor. This done, he took the field with constant good fortune against all the leaders whom Antiochus sent to crush him, whom he overthrew wherever he met them, and against every disparity of numbers.

While Judea was thus nobly asserting its independence, Antiochus had embarked in an expedition against Persia, with the design of plundering that temple of Elymais before which his father perished. He utterly failed in his object, the people again rising, *en masse*, to defend an edifice which they held as sacred ; and he was soon afterward smitten

with a painful and humiliating distemper, of which he died. The latter event occurred B. C. 164; and the throne of Syria was left to his son Antiochus Eupator, then a child of nine years old.

By the tenor of Epiphanes's will, the guardianship of the young king was assigned to one Philip, a great favourite of his master, who hastened to Antioch for the purpose of assuming the charge. He found, however, on arriving there, that Lysias had already taken upon himself the office; and Philip, being too weak to contest the point, fled into Egypt. One of Lysias's first measures was to renew the war with Judea, which he invaded with a prodigious army; but Judas gave him battle, totally routed him, and impressed him with so great a respect for the Jewish name, that he willingly granted the nation peace on very honourable terms. The decree which established among them the heathen religion was repealed; they were permitted to live according to their own customs, with the single stipulation that Menelaus, the apostate, should be reinstated in his office of high-priest.

The tranquillity thus established was soon interrupted by a combination against the Jews of all the neighbouring tribes, the Japhites, the Jamnites, the Arabians, and the Idumeans. Over these, and many others, Judas and his brothers gained numerous successes; after which the gallant Maccabeus began to direct his attention to the reduction of the fort on Mount Acra, by which Jerusalem was sorely galled. But the investment of the place no sooner became known to Lysias, the king's guardian, than he returned to relieve it; for which purpose he assembled an immense army, and advanced towards Jerusalem. There was a small town called Bethsura, between him and the Jewish capital, before which, as he was unwilling to leave it in his rear, Lysias sat down; while Judas, finding it impracticable at once to press the siege of Acra and succour his own countrymen, preferred executing the latter to the former design. He accordingly set out at the head of a handful of brave men, with whom he attacked the Syrian army in its lines, and gained in the confusion inseparable from surprise a considerable advantage; but risking a general action on the following day, he found himself compelled to retreat, after he had lost some of his troops, and one of his

brothers. The person who fell here was Eleazar, who, observing an elephant taller and more richly caparisoned than the rest, took it for granted that it must bear the king; and cutting his way through the intervening ranks, stabbed it in the belly, and was slain by the weight of the animal, which fell upon him.

Lysias, with his royal ward, left a division of the army to continue the siege of Bethsura, while, with the main body, he followed Judas to Jerusalem. The city appears to have offered no resistance; but Maccabeus, shutting himself up in the temple, held out with great resolution, till a rumour of civil commotions at Antioch itself compelled the besiegers to admit him to terms. Once more, therefore, it was stipulated that the Jews should govern themselves, and that no injury should be done to the temple. But Lysias no sooner made good his entrance within the gates of that edifice than he caused the fortifications to be levelled. He then departed for Antioch, carrying the traitor Menelaus along with him; whom he put to death soon afterward by commanding him to be smothered in ashes.

The civil commotions which interfered to save Jerusalem were excited by Philip, who took advantage of the absence of his rival to obtain possession of Antioch; but his adherents being defeated in a single battle, he was himself slain, and order was immediately restored. No great while elapsed, however, ere another and more formidable candidate for supreme power appeared upon the stage in the person of Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, and consequently the rightful heir of the Syrian crown. That prince, who had spent his boyhood as a hostage, and his youth in an honourable exile at Rome, applied to the senate to establish him in his rights, and finding that they paid no heed to his petition, secretly fled from Italy, and landed at Tripolis, in Syria. The inhabitants and the soldiery every where declared in his favour. Eupator and his guardian Lysias were seized and put to death; and he ascended the throne thus made vacant almost without a struggle.

On the execution of Menelaus, one Alcimus had been appointed by Eupator to the high-priesthood of Judea; but being strongly addicted to heathenish practices, the people rose in a tumultuous manner, and expelled him the city. The new king was no sooner secured in his seat, than Alcimus

laid before him many and grievous accusations against his own countrymen in general, and against Maccabeus in particular; in consequence of which Bacchides, the governor of Mesopotamia, was commanded, with a numerous army, forcibly to see him reinstated. By dint of treachery, rather than by the exercise of valour, Bacchides so far succeeded in his design as to restore Alcimus to his position in Jerusalem, where he left him, with a force at his command, to administer the affairs of Judea; but the Mesopotamian had scarcely withdrawn when the people again revolted, and Alcimus was again compelled to seek shelter at the court of Antioch. A fresh invasion, under Nicanor, followed, which afforded Judas an opportunity of earning fresh laurels; and the land obtained rest in consequence for some time; of which Judas gladly availed himself, by despatching ambassadors to Rome to seek the protection of that powerful republic. But before any answer to the application could be received, the illustrious Maccabeus perished while gallantly opposing Bacchides and Alcimus, whom Demetrius sent to avenge the defeat of Nicanor.

The fall of Judas was deeply and justly lamented from one end of Judea to another; and it was followed by a merciless persecution of his adherents by Bacchides and Alcimus. Upon this they elected Jonathan, his younger brother, as their chief, who, hearing that Bacchides was endeavouring to cut him off, retired with his brother Simon and a small army of followers to the fens of Jordan. Here he was attacked by Bacchides with very superior numbers; but though the encounter took place on the Sabbath-day, the Jews gallantly defended themselves, and at last swam the Jordan in order to escape the necessity of laying down their arms. They were not pursued, for Bacchides had seen enough of the temper of these men to dread the effects of their despair; so he returned to Jerusalem, repaired the works on Mount Acra, and once more settling Alcimus in his dignity, withdrew into his own province.

Alcimus did not long enjoy the elevated station to which his Syrian abettors had raised him. He was struck with a palsy at the end of a few weeks, and died; and, as there was no competitor at hand to dispute his title, Jonathan entered without opposition upon the office of chief magistrate. For two years all things went on smoothly; but

there was a powerful faction in Jerusalem which hated the Maccabees, and these, entering into a conspiracy to arrest Jonathan, invited Bacchides to return and support them in their undertaking. He gladly accepted the call, and posted with an army into Judea; not, however, in time to prevent Jonathan from arresting and putting to death fifty of the chief conspirators; after which the gallant Maccabeus retreated to Bethabara in the wilderness. There he maintained himself some time with great resolution, and having defeated Bacchides in several encounters, the latter was well pleased to come to an accommodation; an exchange of prisoners took place, and the Syrians withdrew from Judea.

The treaty of peace just alluded to was signed B. C. 156, from which date till the year 153, Judea enjoyed perfect tranquillity. Jonathan was not idle during this interval: he rooted out the apostates, restored every where the true worship of Jehovah, re-established the law in full force, and repaired the works about Jerusalem; but his civil occupations were at last interrupted by the appearance of a rival to Demetrius on the Syrian throne. This was an impostor, of Rhodes, called Balas, who, pretending to be the son of Antiochus Epiphanes, took the name of Alexander, and was supported by the Romans, the Kings of Pergamus and Egypt; and who, soon after his arrival at Ptolemais, ventured to take the field at the head of a formidable power. The candidates for the crown paid each of them great court to Jonathan and the Jews. Demetrius gave him a commission as general-in-chief in Judea; Alexander sent him an order to assume the vacant office of high-priest; whereupon Demetrius, to surpass his rival, not only assured him of the same dignity, but offered to exempt his country from all taxes, to annex to it the seaport of Ptolemais, and to constitute himself, over and above, governor of four additional districts. Jonathan, however, preferred the favour of Alexander to that of Demetrius, from whom he had already suffered so much; and sending in his adherence, put on the high-priest's robes, raised troops, and provided arms.

In the war which ensued Alexander was victorious, and he strengthened himself in his seat by marrying Cleopatra, the daughter of Ptolemy Philometor, King of Egypt; on which occasion Jonathan, who was present at the nuptials,

received numerous marks of favour from the two sovereigns: but Alexander was a weak man, who resigned himself to the guidance of favourites, and soon lost the respect both of his allies and of his subjects. He was dethroned by Ptolemy, his father-in-law, who, setting up the son of Demetrius in his room, bestowed on him the same daughter whom he had formerly given to Alexander, and the unfortunate impostor perished at last by the hand of an Arab prince, at whose court he sought shelter.

While the struggle between these fresh competitors for the crown of Syria was going on, Jonathan, against whom Apollonius, the governor of Cœlo-Syria, and a favourer of the young Demetrius, advanced, again covered himself with glory by totally routing the invaders, and wresting from them several towns. He then laid close siege to the citadel of Acra, but before he could reduce it the cause of Demetrius prevailed, and Jonathan was summoned to the royal presence to answer for his conduct. He obeyed without a moment's hesitation, leaving strict charges, however, that the siege should not be intermitted; and he made such excellent use of rich presents and fair speeches that the king confirmed him in all his honours, and continued to Judea the exemption from taxes which his predecessor had granted. But Acra was a strong place, well supplied with provisions, and occupied partly by Macedonians, partly by apostate Jews, who maintained themselves with such determined resolution that the siege made no progress. In this emergency, Jonathan, who had returned to Jerusalem, entreated Demetrius to withdraw the garrison; and as the application chanced to be made at a particularly favourable moment, it was not merely granted, but other and more important benefits were secured. Demetrius, though he bravely won the crown of Syria, possessed not ability sufficient honourably to wear it. He disgusted his adherents by disbanding the native troops, and keeping about him only foreign mercenaries, insomuch that the inhabitants of Antioch assembled tumultuously together, and besieged him in his palace. It was at this period that Jonathan's messengers arrived to entreat the withdrawal of the garrison from Mount Acra, and the king gladly promised to obey their wishes, provided Jonathan would supply him with a body of Jewish troops to assist in the suppression

of the sedition. Three thousand chosen men instantly marched to Antioch, and by their calm courage and good conduct freed the king from his difficulties; but the ungrateful monarch forgot the benefit as soon as the danger passed away, and not only continued his soldiers in the citadel at Jerusalem, but demanded payment of those duties from which he had formerly granted an exemption. What consequences might have ensued it is hard to say, had not Doates, otherwise called Tryphon, an old officer under Alexander Balus, at this critical juncture set up the son of his former master as king; and the whole empire, being weary of a prince as capricious as he was tyrannical, immediately declared for the new candidate. Demetrius was defeated, and fled into Seleucia, while his rival mounted the throne with the title of Antiochus Eutheus.

Jonathan, disgusted with the duplicity of Demetrius, early declared for Antiochus, and cheerfully assisted in the reduction of Gaza, Bethsura, and Joppa, over which places as well as over the whole country from Tyre to Ptolemais his brother Simon was made governor; but the castle of Acra still held out though hemmed in on every side by a wall and sore pressed by famine. It very soon appeared, however, that in giving his aid to Tryphon he had been the dupe of a traitor of the deepest die. That warrior, whose object it had been from the first to place the crown upon his own head, artfully enticed Jonathan into his power and slew him, with his two sons and a thousand of his followers, in Ptolemais. He next murdered Antiochus, mounted the throne, and proclaimed himself king of the Syrian empire.

The death of Jonathan was no sooner known than Simon offered his services to his countrymen, which being gladly accepted, he repaired all the fortresses in Judea, and put them in a posture of defence. His next measure was to reconcile himself and his people with Demetrius, then an exile at Laodicea, who not only granted them an amnesty on account of all past offences, but constituted Simon prince as well as high-priest of the Jews.

By virtue of this decree Simon declared Judea an independent nation; and it was proclaimed in a public assembly, that "the Jews were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and priest for ever, until there should arise

a *faithful prophet*," in other words, the Messiah. Nor did the good fortune of the tribes end here. The fort of Acra, which had so long held out, fell; its walls were razed to the ground, and the very hill upon which they had stood was levelled, while the Romans, in answer to an embassy from Jerusalem, admitted Simon as a free prince into the number of their allies.

In the mean time Demetrius, rousing from his sloth, formed an expedition against the eastern portion of the empire, to which he was invited by the inhabitants, then groaning under the misery of a Parthian subjugation. In this war, John the son of Simon took part, and distinguished himself so highly that he obtained the surname of Hyrcanus, in commemoration of the scene of his triumphs. But Demetrius, who was at first eminently successful, suffered himself to be surprised and was made prisoner. The captive monarch was not, however, harshly used by the head of the Parthian states, who, on the contrary, furnished him with an honourable maintenance, and gave him his own daughter in marriage; yet the circumstance led to great changes, and seriously endangered for a season the liberty of Judea. Cleopatra, the wife of Demetrius, indignant at his infidelity, offered herself to his brother Antiochus, and invited him to attempt the recovery of the throne from Tryphon; and Antiochus, readily closing with the proposition, wrote immediately to Simon, whom he addressed as high-priest and prince of the Jews. Simon did not oppose his progress, which was at once rapid and exceedingly prosperous; but the new monarch no sooner found himself secured by the death of the usurper than he violated all his engagements, and demanded the restitution of Joppa and Gaza. Simon would not agree to the requisition; an army was in consequence sent against him; but his gallant sons Judas and John took the field and entirely routed it. That, however, which open force could not effect, base and domestic treachery accomplished. Simon's son-in-law, Ptolemy, invited the venerable high-priest and his sons to an entertainment, and murdered them all except John Hyrcanus, who, happily for Judea, had not accepted the invitation. John, who chanced at the moment to be in
B. C. 136. Gaza, no sooner received intelligence of the deed, than, apprehensive of suffering a similar fate, he fled with

all haste to Jerusalem. There the people gladly received him, elected him as their chief ruler, and closed their gates against the assassin, who forthwith made application to Antiochus for a body of troops to assist him in the accomplishment of his usurpation. But before the Syrians could arrive Hyrcanus had driven Ptolemy from the field, and shut him up in a fortress near Jericho, out of which he escaped only by the recurrence of the sabbatical year, to spend the rest of his days in exile.

Antiochus, all this while, was not remiss in availing himself of the distracted state of the country. He besieged Hyrcanus in his capital, and reduced him to such extremities that Jerusalem once more opened its gates to a conqueror; its works were dismantled, a tribute imposed upon it, and Judea was reduced to the rank of a province. In his capacity of vassal to the Syrian crown Hyrcanus afterward followed Antiochus to the Parthian war, where by his valour and skill he contributed not a little to the success of the campaign, which restored Babylonia, Media, and other districts to the empire; but the Jews having returned to winter in their own country, while Antiochus with the rest of the army occupied cantonments in the conquered provinces, the latter were to a man surprised and cut off by the inhabitants.

With great promptitude and perfect justice Hyrcanus seized this favourable opportunity once more to assert the independence of his country; and while Demetrius, whom the Parthians had set at liberty, was contesting the succession with Alexander Zebina, he greatly enlarged its bounds by foreign conquests. He subdued Shechem; destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim, which Sanballat had built; conquered the Idumeans or Edomites, and compelled them to become converts to Judaism; and renewed the league with Rome, which conferred upon him higher privileges than any Jewish ruler had ever before enjoyed. His last military exploit was the capture of Samaria, which after a year's siege fell into the hands of his army, and was laid in ruins so completely as to leave but slender probability that it could ever be rebuilt.

Simon's latter years were rendered somewhat uncomfortable by the intrigues of the Pharisees, a sect not more notorious for hypocritical pretensions than for their restless-

ness and sedition ; and he was in consequence driven to the necessity of quitting them, and enrolling himself among the Sadducees.* But on the whole his pontificate was a prosperous as it was a long one, and he died in peace, after having worn the mitre thirty years, B. C. 106.

Hyrcanus left behind him five sons ; the eldest of whom, by name Aristobulus, obtained the ethnarchy. Of a jealous and tyrannical disposition, he cast his own mother into prison, and there starved her to death, because she presumed, by virtue of her husband's will, to claim some share in the government ; and he placed the whole of his brothers, except one, under strict surveillance. This person, whose name was Antigonus, he at first treated with great kindness. He associated him with himself in the sovereignty ; employed him in his war with the Idumeans, a people of Coelo-Syria, who bordered upon the territories of Manasseh, and left him to command the army when sickness compelled his own return. But even of him he became eventually so distrustful as to sanction his murder by the hands of his guards. It is but justice to Aristobulus to state, that in this last act of cruelty he was less to be blamed than his queen and counsellors. These inspired him with a notion, that because Antigonus had gone up to the temple in armour to return God thanks for his victories over the Idumeans, it was his design to obtain possession of the priesthood by force ; and by this artifice the innocent youth was insnared into a danger which, had he been left to his own discretion, he might have avoided. Aristobulus sent messengers to desire that his brother would come to him as soon as he had ended his devotions, resolving to judge of his guilt or innocence according to the manner in which he obeyed the summons. If he came unarmed, then he was to depart uninjured ; if in his armour, the guards were ordered to despatch him. The queen knew this, and directed the messengers to require his appearance in his armour. He came accoutred, and was slain. Aristobulus did not long survive the murder of his brother. He died after a reign of one year, being the first governor of Judea since the captivity who assumed the title of king and wore a diadem.

* For an account of the origin and tenets of the Jewish sects, see the notes appended to this chapter.

B. C. Aristobulus was succeeded on the throne by his
105. brother Alexander Jannæus, whose reign was one continued scene of violence and bloodshed. At first hostilities were carried on against foreign powers only, beginning with an attempt on Alexander's part to recover Ptolemais; but the inhabitants, imploring the assistance of Ptolemy Lathyrus, whom his mother Cleopatra had deprived of the Egyptian crown, the Jewish monarch was soon involved in a war with that prince. Alexander suffered in this contest a severe defeat, in which thirty thousand of his people perished; and must have been totally subdued had not Cleopatra sent an army to his assistance, which compelled Ptolemy to evacuate his territories, and finally to take refuge in Cyprus, his original hiding-place. Jannæus next turned his arms against several fortresses on the Cælo-Syrian frontier, which had either been wrested from him or had revolted, recovered Gadara, and took Amallais; but he was attacked at disadvantage while returning from the latter place by Theodorus, prince of Philadelphia, and defeated with the loss of ten thousand men.

Alexander's worst and most implacable enemies were, however, the Pharisees, whom his father had thoroughly alienated, and whom he took no pains to conciliate. These so highly excited the people against him that he was pelted with citrons, and loaded with maledictions, while officiating as high-priest at the feast of tabernacles. Alexander, being a person of irritable temper, avenged the insult by causing his guards to massacre numbers of the crowd. The consequence was an increased feeling of hatred towards him, which, on the occasion of his receiving a severe defeat from Obodas an Arabian, broke out into a civil war, and fattened the soil of Judæa for many years with the blood of her children. In almost every encounter Alexander was victorious; yet when, at the close of six years of horrors, he would have come to an accommodation with his rebellious subjects, they declared with one voice, that if he desired to gratify them, or to give peace to his country, he must cut his own throat; and sending for succours to Demetrius Eucharæ, King of Damascus, they renewed the struggle with increased virulence. A great battle ensued, in which Alexander was totally routed, his six thousand foreign guards cut to pieces, and his native troops dispersed: but

this circumstance, in appearance so unfortunate, proved in the end exceedingly advantageous to him. Many of the rebels, repenting of the part which they had played, went over to the king in his misfortunes; and Demetrius, retiring into his own country, Alexander soon recovered his superiority over the adverse faction. Finally, after driving them from the field, he shut up the remains of their army in Bethsura, which he carried by storm; and removing about eight hundred of the heads of the party to Jerusalem, he there crucified them, and put an end to the rebellion.

For three years after this, Alexander employed himself in the reduction of such castles as still held out, and extended his conquests into the territories of those powers which had taken part with his rebellious subjects. He was every where victorious; but being addicted to an immoderate use of wine, and other stimulants, he brought on an ague, which put a period to his life. He died while employed in the siege of Rajaba, beyond Jordan, after having appointed his queen Alexandra to the regency during the minority of his sons.

B. C. 178. Aware of the abhorrence in which he was held by the Pharisees, and justly dreading the consequences to his family, Alexander no sooner felt that recovery was impossible, than he advised the queen to conceal his death, till she should have carried back his body to Jerusalem. He directed her then to expose it to the discretion of that powerful body, as the corpse of one whose crimes deserved the abhorrence of all good men. The advice was exceedingly judicious; and the expectations under which it was bestowed proved well grounded; for the Pharisees, mollified by this show of humility, not only took the royal family under their protection, but granted to the remains of the deceased monarch a gorgeous funeral. But they soon showed, that though willing to forget the offences of the king himself, they were not equally disposed to pass over those of his advisers. They instigated the queen to commence a severe persecution of all such persons as were suspected of having been accessory to the crucifixion of their leaders; and they prevailed upon her to put to death several, among whom was Diogenes, a principal confederate of her late husband. The rest, however, were saved through the address of her younger son Aristobulus,

who persuaded her to disperse them among the remote garrisons ; and the Pharisees consenting to the measure, tranquillity was restored.

Alexandra had two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, the former a young man of peaceable and domestic habits, the latter ambitious and active. Hyrcanus she advanced, as the elder brother, to the priesthood, while Aristobulus took the command of the army, with which he performed no exploit more memorable than to secure it absolutely to his own interests. A short contest with Ptolemy Meneus at Damascus, and a threatened invasion by Tigranes, King of Armenia, whom the Syrians had called to the throne, were the only public occurrences in her reign worthy of notice ; but the first of these produced no results, and from the danger of the last Judea was delivered in consequence of the invasion of Armenia by a Roman army. Alexandra died after she had swayed the sceptre nine years, and was succeeded by her son Hyrcanus.

This prince, of whose unassuming and domestic habits notice has already been taken, wore the crown B. C. 69. but three months, when his brother Aristobulus compelled him to resign it, and retire into private life. Hyrcanus himself would have cheerfully consented to the measure ; but there was about his person one Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, who professed a sincere friendship for him, and who persuaded him that he must either recover the crown, or die by the hands of Aristobulus. At the instigation of this individual, Hyrcanus fled to the court of Aretas, King of Arabia, who at his earnest entreaty readily supplied him with troops ; and he returned at the head of fifty thousand men to assert his title to the throne. Aristobulus was defeated, compelled to retire to Jerusalem, and shut himself up in the temple ; nor was it till he had gained over to his side Scarus, the Roman lieutenant, who had advanced as far as Damascus, that the siege of that strong fortress was raised. Aretas, however, was afraid to disobey the mandate of the haughty republican. He withdrew with his forces, and Hyrcanus became again an exile.

Not long after this, Pompey himself, having finished B. C. 65. the war in the north, arrived at Damascus, and stripping Antiochus Asiaticus of his dominions, reduced the kingdom of Syria to the rank of a Roman province.

He was met here by ambassadors from all the nations round, each loaded with presents, and solicitous of his favour; but it was not till two years later that Hyrcanus and Aristobulus appeared before him, to obtain a settlement of their dispute. Pompey, with great policy, determined to give an award to the elder and weaker of the claimants, though for the present he affected to leave the matter in doubt; but Aristobulus, penetrating his design, fled to Damascus, and began to arm Judea in his own defence. The Roman immediately marched into the country; upon which, Aristobulus, hopeless of being able to offer any effectual resistance, agreed to surrender his castles, and throw himself on the mercy of the conqueror. But as on more than one occasion he resumed a hostile attitude, Gabinius, Pompey's lieutenant, pushed on to Jerusalem. Here, however, Aristobulus's courage forsook him. He came out to meet Gabinius, surrendered himself a prisoner, and issued strict orders that Jerusalem should be given up; but his followers, more resolute than he, refused to obey the command, and the place was besieged. The city itself was soon gained through the assistance of Hyrcanus's party, but the temple held out for three months with great resolution; at the close of which period it was carried by assault, with a terrible carnage of the garrison. Pompey himself penetrated into the holy of holies, and though he spared the treasury, caused its fortifications to be demolished: he beat down, likewise, the walls of the town, and after reinstating Hyrcanus in the office of high-priest, returned to Rome, whither he carried in his train Aristobulus, two of his daughters, and his sons Alexander and Antigonus, B. C. 63.

While the prisoners were on their way to the Roman capital, Alexander, the elder of Aristobulus's sons, contrived to make his escape, and returning into Judea, soon gathered round him a considerable body of followers. So long as he was opposed by Hyrcanus's party alone he carried every thing before him; but Gabinius, the Roman prefect of Syria, sending Mark Antony to the assistance of the high-priest, Alexander was constrained to shut himself up in the castle of Alexandria. He was closely besieged here, and in the end obliged to submit; after which Hyrcanus continued for a time to enjoy his honours unmolested. These, how-

ever, it is to be observed, were more nominal than real. Pompey, when he took possession of Jerusalem and restored Hyrcanus to the priesthood, had forbidden him to wear a crown, or assume other ensigns of sovereignty; and now Gabinius entirely new modelled the whole system of Jewish government. He deprived the sanhedrim, which had hitherto acted as courts of justice under the prince, of all authority; and setting up five independent tribunals at Jerusalem, Jericho, Gadara, Amathus, and Sephoris, committed to them the power of administering summary justice to all the inhabitants within their respective districts. This necessarily threw the whole power into the hands of the nobles who presided in these courts, leaving to Hyrcanus little more than the name; and so things continued from B. C. 57 to B. C. 47, when Julius Cæsar, out of favour to Antipater, restored them to their ancient order.

We pass over a fresh attempt made by Aristobulus and his son Antigonus, to recover the dignity which the former had lost; and which, by effecting their escape from Rome, they were enabled to make. It ended, as Alexander's had done, in the defeat and capture of the malecontents, though their condition was so far bettered by it that the whole of the family, with the exception of Aristobulus himself, succeeded in obtaining their liberty. Neither is it necessary to give any account of the wars between Pompey and Cæsar, further than by stating that Aristobulus, having declared himself ready to take part with the latter, was by him set free, and perished by poison, administered to him by Pompey's agents. Alexander likewise, his son, was beheaded, after a formal trial, at Antioch, having been convicted of levying forces with the same design. Yet such was the influence which Antipater had acquired over Cæsar, that he absolutely refused to listen to Antigonus the survivor, or molest Hyrcanus in the priesthood. On the contrary, he restored the government to its ancient form, abolished the aristocracy which Gabinius had established, and sanctioned the appointment of Antipater's two sons, Phasaël and Herod, the one to the government of Jerusalem and the districts adjacent, the other to that of Galatia.

Herod, who was a man of daring spirit and high talents, soon attracted the envy and hostility of the Jews, and they anxiously watched for a fit oppor-

B. C.

47.

tunity of working his ruin. It happened that this district was much infested with robbers, against whom he took the field ; and having broken up their bands and secured several of the leaders, he put them to death of his own authority. He was immediately summoned before the great sanhedrim, to be arraigned on the charge of taking away life without trial ; but he appeared in a fashion which struck his judges dumb, and hindered them from carrying their designs into execution. One old man alone, by name Simeon, had the boldness to express his amazement that a criminal should presume to stand before his judges in a royal robe, predicting, at the same time, that he would yet prove a scourge to the country. Yet was Herod under the necessity of secretly withdrawing from Jerusalem, and putting himself under the protection of Sextus Cæsar, prefect of Syria, who, in consideration of a large sum of money, constituted him governor of Cælo-Syria ; where he raised an army, and would have taken ample vengeance upon the sanhedrim, had not his father and brother interfered to prevent it.

While Julius Cæsar lived, Judea enjoyed greater prosperity than it had done since the Babylonish captivity. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, the tribute due to Rome was remitted every sabbatical year ; and the internal administration of affairs was wisely carried on under Hyrcanus, by Antipater, his two sons, and one Malichus a Jew ; but the assassination of Cæsar and the troubles consequent upon it again threw matters into confusion. Each new prefect imposed fresh burdens upon the province ; while internal dissensions sprang up, as they invariably do, with a rapidity proportionate to the weakness of the general government. Antipater was poisoned by Malichus, through envy that an Idumean should enjoy so much influence ; and Malichus was cut off by Phasael and Herod, to avenge their father's death. Tumults arose, in which Hyrcanus and the Roman commander Felix espoused the cause of Malichus's party ; but the brothers proving too strong to be successfully resisted, the high-priest was fain to make his peace by bestowing upon Herod the hand of his granddaughter Mariamne.

An appeal was next made by the discontented among the Jews to Mark Antony, now victorious over Brutus, at Philippi ; but he, partly in consideration of Antipater's

services, partly in return for a considerable bribe, committed the entire management of Judea to the brothers, and detained fifteen of the principal men of the opposite faction as hostages for the good behaviour of the rest. All, however, availed not to reconcile the Jews to the government of the Idumeans; they sent again a thousand of their number to supplicate against the decree, upon whom Antony scrupled not to inflict summary punishment; and when Herod would have returned to Jerusalem, they attacked his escort, and slew several persons. But there was assistance at hand, of which they gladly availed themselves.

Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, finding his cause desperate, had taken refuge at the court of the King of Parthia, from whom he solicited and obtained an army to assist him in asserting his claim to the throne of Judea. It chanced that he arrived in the country at the very moment when Herod's unpopularity was at the height, and he was in consequence joined by multitudes of persons, who at any other time might have opposed him. Herod wisely bent to a storm which he found himself incapable of resisting: he evacuated Jerusalem, carrying with him his wife Mariamne, his mother, his sister Salome, and Alexandra, Mariamne's mother, and placed them, with a numerous garrison on whose fidelity he could rely, in a strong hill-fort, called Massada, on the western shore of the lake Asphaltites. This done, he retired towards Petræa, in Arabia; but being commanded by the king to quit his dominions, he returned to Egypt; from whence, finding that Antony was not there, he passed over to Rome.

In the mean while Antigonus, having secured the persons of Hyrcanus and Phasaël, cut off the ears of the former, and was anticipated in his design of crucifying the latter by his committing suicide. He then put on the mitre, provided Jerusalem with ample stores, and after surrendering Hyrcanus into the hands of the Parthians, who carried him to Seleucia, prepared to hold out to the last extremity. Nor were these precautions needless: Herod pleaded his own cause so effectually at Rome that he obtained a grant of the Jewish crown to himself; and being supplied with a Roman army in order to realize it, appeared within a shorter space of time than could have been anticipated in the field. At first the war went on slowly, Silo, the Roman

general, being in the pay of both parties; but in the end, Herod, after a second application to Antony, received fresh troops and fresh authority. Notwithstanding certain reverses which his party had suffered during his absence, in one of which his brother Joseph fell, Herod again drove Antigonus within the capital, which he closely invested with a force of sixty thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry. After a desperate resistance, which continued about a year, the city was taken by storm, and suffered the extreme rigour of military execution.

The fate of Antigonus was not different from
 B. C. that which he had reason to expect; though taken
 37.

at first under the protection of Mark Antony, who designed to keep him alive for the purpose of gracing his own triumph, he was finally, at the urgent entreaty of Herod, publicly executed, the rods and axe of the lictor being employed to add ignominy to an end in itself sufficiently cruel. Thus was extinguished the Asmonean dynasty, after it had subsisted one hundred and twenty-six years, "a noble and illustrious house," says Josephus, "distinguished by their descent, by the dignity of their pontificate, and by the great exploits of their ancestors for the nation."

Of the throne thus rendered vacant Herod made haste to take possession, and the better to secure himself in it, he put to death all who had opposed his growing influence. Of the sanhedrim, before which he once stood as a criminal, he left alive only two members, Polleo and Sameas, both of whom are spoken of by the rabbins under the names of Hylliel and Shamai, and them he spared, not through any reverence for the office, but because they had been strenuous advocates for the surrender of the beleaguered city. His next measure was to nominate to the high-priesthood one Ananelus, a person of the sacerdotal family indeed, but utterly unknown; whom, however, through the remonstrances of Alexandra and Mariamne, supported by the interest of Cleopatra; he deposed within a year, that he might set up Aristobulus, the son of Alexandra, in his room. He then invited back to Jerusalem the aged Hyrcanus, whom Phraortes, king of Parthia, had treated with great respect; and for some time behaved to him with the deference due to his birth, and the delicacy to which his misfortunes entitled him. But Herod was far from being at his ease so long as two members of

the Asmonean family survived ; and he accordingly began before long to meditate their removal.

Aristobulus was an exceedingly handsome youth ; and though only eighteen years of age, discharged his sacerdotal duties with so much dignity that the people were greatly delighted with his air and carriage. Herod heard of this, and fearful lest they might rise in his favour, he invited the young high-priest to a sumptuous entertainment at one of his palaces in the city. There chanced to be a fishpond near the house, in which the guests, after dinner, bathed ; and Aristobulus, unsuspecting of treason, readily joined in the amusement. He was immediately surrounded by a band of courtiers, seized, as if in sport, and repeatedly ducked ; till, by holding him under water a sufficient length of time, they deprived him of life. Great lamentation was made in consequence of the unhappy accident, and the high-priest was buried with much solemnity, Herod himself appearing as chief mourner : yet there was not an individual in the country, of any age or rank, who failed to see through the flimsy subterfuge. Alexandra and Mariamne, in particular, were both deeply affected by the occurrence ; indeed, the latter survived the blow only with the hope of obtaining ample vengeance. For this purpose she renewed her intrigues with Cleopatra, who so far wrought upon Antony, that Herod was summoned before him ; but the king, by the plausibility of his manner, not less than by the value of his presents, easily turned Antony's anger into compassion. Yet was his journey productive to him of many and serious misfortunes, though from a quarter where least of all he expected them to come.

When he quitted Jerusalem to proceed on this ominous journey, Herod left the administration of all his affairs, public as well as private, to his uncle Joseph, who stood to him likewise in the relation of brother, in consequence of his marriage with Salome. Among other injunctions, he required the regent, in the event of his failing to return, to put to death both Alexandra and Mariamne ; giving out as his motive that he could not bear the idea of his beloved wife becoming the property of another ; but more truly, perhaps, for the sake of securing the succession in his own family. Joseph, who had been strictly commanded to keep this part of his commission secret, imprudently made

Mariamne acquainted with it ; and she, as a necessary consequence, received the king with excessive coldness on his return. Herod was deeply wounded, for his love towards Mariamne was of no ordinary kind ; more especially when Salome, who hated the queen, accused her of infidelity with her own husband, Joseph ; but he so far commanded himself as to implore her not to conceal from him the reason of her unexpected and mortifying behaviour. Mariamne, indignant at the charge brought against her, divulged the truth, which, instead of allaying, only confirmed Herod's suspicions. With the utmost difficulty he restrained himself from stabbing her to the heart ; and he quitted her only to give orders that Joseph should instantly be put to death. From that hour Herod's domestic happiness was at an end. His wife, whom he adored with almost idolatrous fondness, continued estranged from him ; his mother-in-law was engaged in constant intrigues against him, and his sister Salome, more mischievous than all the rest, was continually filling his mind with suspicions of those nearest and dearest to him. It might almost be accounted a relief to a man so situated, when the course of events upon the great stage of the world called him again into public, even though the occasion which drew him forth from his privacy chanced to be a momentous one.

The occasion to which we allude was the overthrow of Mark Antony, whose quarrel with Octavius Herod had warmly espoused, and whom he had served to the latest moment with a fidelity worthy of a better cause. Finding that the infatuated lover of Cleopatra was utterly ruined, Herod considered it incumbent upon him to provide for his own security, and he adopted the following expedients for that purpose : He put to death Hyrcanus, now upwards of eighty years of age, ostensibly because he had been detected in carrying on a treasonable correspondence with Malchus, King of Arabia ; but, in reality, to provide against the possibility of his being restored to the throne by Octavius ; and then, with a hardihood as politic as it was uncommon, set out for Rhodes, where the victorious general had fixed his head-quarters. Being admitted into the presence, Herod, so far from denying his attachment to Antony, explicitly avowed it. He said that he had always acted so far like a man of honour, and that if Octavius

would accept his friendship, he would find that he who had proved faithful to one benefactor would not betray another. The address had the desired effect; Octavius, pleased with his manliness and candour, not only confirmed him in his kingdom, but treated him ever after with marked distinction; and Herod returned home to enjoy absolute prosperity as a monarch, but no happiness as a man.

The very same maladventures which had attended his journey to Alexandria occurred on the occasion of his excursion to Rhodes. The order of death which he had this time intrusted to an Idumean, named Sohemus, was again divulged to her who was the subject of it, and his proffered embraces were again repelled with scorn. Mad with rage, he put one of Mariamne's confidential slaves to the torture, and having wrung from him a confession that the queen's behaviour was occasioned by some communication made to her by Sohemus, the suspicions which formerly tormented him as to his wife's guilt returned with tenfold force. Sohemus shared the fate of Joseph, and Mariamne herself was solemnly arraigned before prejudiced judges, whose sentence of condemnation Herod, at the instigation of his mother and sister, was induced, in an evil hour, to carry into immediate effect. A violent illness was the consequence; during the continuance of which Alexandra, receiving a report of the king's death, made ready to seize the crown; but the latter no sooner recovered than he inflicted upon her the punishment which her many crimes deserved.

The remainder of Herod's life was spent with great external splendour, in the midst of numerous private miseries, the effect of numerous crimes. The public works for which his reign is memorable were, the erection of a splendid palace on Mount Sion, the site of the original Jebus which David took, and of the citadel which so much annoyed the Maccabees during the Syrian wars; the restoration of Samaria, and the construction of the city and port of Cæsarea, near Stratos, a town on the coast of Palestine; but that on which he chiefly prided himself was the rebuilding of the temple, which time and the violence of war had contributed materially to injure. This mighty task he began in the year B. C. 17, after having devoted two whole years to the accumulation of materials; and such was the rapidity with which the workmen proceeded, that within a year and a

half the sanctuary was finished. Eight years more were expended in the construction of the out-buildings, when the whole became again fit for the celebration of divine service; though it was not till the year A. D. 62, long after Herod had returned into dust, that the magnificent structure can be said to have been completed.

With respect to his private transactions, these, if accurately described, would present little else besides a melancholy picture of cruelties and follies. His nearest relatives perished on every side; the victims of his own suspicions and his sister's treachery. Nay, his very sons escaped not the common fate, in which were involved all that approached the tyrant's person. Two of these, the children of Mariamne, died victims to his apprehensions and their own unguarded language; while a third received his just doom when contriving the death of his aged father. In the mean while the gates of the temple of Janus were shut at Rome, and throughout the whole compass of the civilized world the sound of war ceased to be heard. Augustus, victorious over all his enemies, swayed the imperial sceptre with moderation and justice, and mankind enjoyed, as it were, a breathing space from anarchy and strife, when the eventful period having arrived to which so many prophecies had pointed, the long-looked-for and now anxiously-expected Messiah was ushered into the world.

NOTE A.

No question connected with Jewish polity has given rise to disputes more violent than the origin of the sanhedrim, or judicial council, of which repeated mention has been made in the preceding chapter. According to the legends of the rabbins, it began in the wilderness under Moses, where the lawgiver was persuaded by his father-in-law to choose seventy men as judges in causes of lesser note; from which period till the final destruction of the temple by the Romans it never ceased to exert its influence in the management of public affairs; but to this notion so many and such obvious difficulties are opposed, that few persons of learning or discrimination will, we presume, be disposed to admit it.

To enumerate but a few of these. There is not, in the Book of Judges, the slightest mention made of any permanent
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nent judicial or legislative body established among the Israelites. We read, indeed, of magistrates in every city and town, to assist whom a sort of council of the heads of families was always at hand; and we find that the chiefs of tribes assembled in cases of extreme emergency to consult upon measures affecting the general weal; but of a body such as the rabbins represent the ancient sanhedrim to have been, or similar either in its constitution or privileges to the sanhedrim in later times, no hint whatever is given. We are justified, therefore, in concluding that at that period of Jewish history at least it had no existence. Indeed we are expressly told that the sanhedrim there was anarchy, every man doing that which was right in his own eyes. Again, during the continuance of the monarchy, from Saul to the Babylonish captivity, it is manifest that the sanhedrim was either unknown or that it possessed no degree of authority in any matters of civil or religious administration. Whatever the king's disposition might be, it invariably prevailed, the people becoming idolaters or otherwise according as he set the example; an occurrence which surely would not have taken place had such an institution existed as the rabbinical sanhedrim; while in civil affairs he appears to have exercised an authority perfectly uncontrolled by any council recognised by the constitution. Nay, even on the return from the Babylonish captivity in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, and their immediate successors, we find no trace whatever of the sanhedrim; and it is quite as unreasonable to suppose that the sacred historians would have neglected to notice it had it existed, as that Livy or Tacitus would have omitted all allusion to the proceedings of the Roman senate.

The conclusion to which the preceding reasoning leads is this: that the real sanhedrim had its origin in the times of the Maccabees, acquired strength and constancy under the Asmonean sovereigns, and at length rose to such a degree of authority as to become formidable to the sovereigns themselves. It was probably created in those times of anarchy when no man could venture to act for his country's good without carrying a powerful party along with him; and having about it something of the spirit of a popular assembly, the nation would never afterward permit the institution to be abolished. Respecting its constitution

and the extent of its authority, on the other hand, no doubt whatever exists. It consisted of a president, called *nasi*, or prince of the sanhedrim; a deputy, called *abbeth-din*, or father of the house of judgment; and a sub-deputy, called *chacam*, or "the wise;" besides seventy members, who passed under the common appellation of elders or senators. "The room in which they met," says Calmet, "was a rotunda, half of which was built without the temple, and half within; i. e. one semicircle of the room was within the precincts of the temple; and as it was never allowed to sit down in the temple, they (the rabbins) tell us that this part was for those who stood up; the other half or semicircle extended without the holy place, and here the judges sat." "The *nasi*, or prince, sat on a throne at the end of the hall, his deputy at his right hand, and sub-deputy at his left. The other senators were ranged in order on each side. This hall was called *Lishcath-haggazeth*, or the hall paved with stones, and some think it to be the same called *lithostrotos*, or formed with stones" (*John* xix. 13). "The authority of the great sanhedrim was very extensive. This council decided causes brought before it by appeal from inferior courts. The king, the high-priest, the prophets were under its jurisdiction; also the general affairs of the nation were brought before the sanhedrim. The right of judging in capital cases belonged to this court, and the sentence could not be pronounced in any other place but in the hall called *Lishcath-haggazeth*; from whence it came to pass that the Jews were forced to quit this hall when the power of life and death was taken out of their hands, forty years before the destruction of their temple, and three years before the death of Jesus Christ." "As to the personal qualifications of the judges of this court, their birth was to be untainted; they were often of the race of priests or Levites, or of the number of the inferior judges. They were to be skilful in the law, traditional as well as written. They were obliged to study magic, divination, fortune-telling, physic, astrology, arithmetic, and languages. Eunuchs were excluded from the sanhedrim, usurers, decrepit persons, players at games of chance, those who had any bodily infirmity, those who had brought up pigeons to decoy others to the pigeon-houses, and those who made a gain of their fruits in sabbatical years. Some also exclude the

high-priest and the king, because of their too great power, but others insist that the king always presided in the sanhedrim, while there was a king in Israel. Lastly, it was required that the members of the sanhedrim should be of mature age, rich, of good countenance and body. Such was the great national assembly of the Jewish people, before which both our Lord and his disciples were so often arraigned.

NOTE B.

It is not very easy to determine the precise date at which the sects or schools arose into which the Jewish church came, in latter years, to be divided. We possess strong grounds, indeed, for asserting both that such distinctions did not exist previous to the Babylonish captivity, and that they began to be only when the prophetic gift entirely ceased in Judea; but how soon after this event they assumed the form and consistency to which they ultimately attained, we possess no means accurately to decide. The general opinion, however, is, and we see little reason to dissent from it, that the foundation of the schools was laid in the time of Ezra; and the following is the account given of their origin:

When Ezra applied himself to the task of revising the sacred books, he was assisted by a body of one hundred and twenty elders, distinguished among their brethren for learning and knowledge, and thoroughly versed in the traditions of the nation. These traditions, it is to be observed, related wholly to matters ceremonial: to practices which had been approved, and in common use prior to the captivity; but which, as they formed no essential ingredient in the sacred law, had never been recorded in a book. With great good sense Ezra and his fellow-labourers revised them; and together with their own interpretations of difficult passages in the Scriptures, handed them down orally to their successors in office.

From this slender beginning arose the school of the Pharisees, a sect not more remarkable for their extravagant pretensions to holiness than for the turbulence of their conduct as citizens and members of the body politic. Their name they took from a Hebrew word, which signifies "separation," to denote that they stood apart from all the rest of

their species ; and the opinions which they hold in matters of religion unquestionably tended to keep them so. They contended that the traditions which they dignified with the title of the oral law sprang from the same source with the written law, being transmitted by Jehovah himself to Moses on Mount Sinai ; that from Moses they passed in a regular succession through Aaron, Eleazar, and his sons, down to Barak, Jeremiah, and Ezra ; and that the written law would be in no respect valuable, nor indeed intelligible, without the light thrown upon it by the oral. "Hence," says Prideaux, "it is a common saying among them that the covenant was made with them, not upon the written law, but upon the oral law ; and, therefore, they do in a manner lay aside the former to make room for the latter, and resolve their whole religion into pure traditions, in the same manner as the Romanists do theirs ; having no further regard to the written word of God than as it agrees with their traditionary explications of it ; but always preferring them thereto, though in many particulars they are quite contradictory to it ; which is a conception that had grown to a great height among them even in our Saviour's time ; for he charges them with it, and tells them 'that they make the word of God of none effect through their traditions.'"

The Pharisees were firm believers in the doctrine of the soul's immortality ; though their opinions touching its mode of existence after it had quitted the body were exceedingly erroneous. Like the celebrated Pythagoras, they adopted the notion of a metempsychosis, holding that the souls of the righteous passed into the bodies of men, those of the wicked into the bodies of beasts ; and they believed that this process would continue to go on, till the arrival of a great day when God should finally judge the world. They entertained likewise some vague expectation of a resurrection, as appears from the question put by the Sadducees to our Saviour, relative to the wife of seven husbands, though the same question distinctly proves that of the consequences of that great event their ideas were both gross and unworthy. It is to be observed, moreover, that they limited the resurrection strictly to their own countrymen, all other nations being, in their judgment, doomed to perish everlastingly ; while the kind of enjoyments which they anticipated in heaven were of a nature too impure to be described.

The Pharisees were distinguished by their extreme attention to every sacred rite enjoined by their law. Scrupulous to the last degree in the payment of tithes, and ostentatious in their devotional exercises, they were malicious, griping, proud, and avaricious; and while they affected an extraordinary purity of body, their minds were avowedly polluted by the blackest thoughts. They kept many fasts of supererogation; observed the Sabbath with such rigour that they would not even administer to the wants of a dying fellow-creature on that day; and; to attract the respect of the vulgar, they wore huge phylacteries, or strips of parchment, about their persons, inscribed with sentences from their law. The Pharisees were by these means held in high repute among the common people, and seem to have possessed no small degree of influence among all classes.

The political opinions of the Pharisees, again, were of a nature totally at variance with order or good government. They contended that all power ought to be vested in the sanhedrim; that there ought to be no chief ruler over Israel, and that it was sinful in the sight of God to pay tribute to any foreign power. Hence their aptness to join in any seditious movement, of which, indeed, a Pharisee was usually the originator, and which they at last carried so far as to bring about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Directly opposed to the Pharisees in almost every point were the Sadducees; a sect whose origin has been traced back to Sadoc, a disciple of one of Ezra's coadjutors, by name Antigonus Sacho. This man taught that God ought to be worshipped as a being of infinite goodness, power, mercy, and excellence, without any view on the part of his creatures to their own personal benefit; a doctrine upon which his scholars soon ingrafted opinions to which he is not supposed to have given any countenance. They contended that there was no future state, either of rewards or punishments; that the soul perished with the body; that the only pure spirit in existence was Jehovah, and that the messengers whom he employed in his intercourse with the patriarchs were material creatures. They totally rejected that oral law to which the Pharisees adhered, and admitted as inspired only the five books of Moses, though they received the others as the performance of good men, and allowed that they were worthy of attention on account of

the moral lessons which they contained. Yet, though such were the opinions of the Sadducees, touching the future, they entertained no doubt of a Providence which punished vice and rewarded virtue in this life, and hence their morals were at least as pure as those of the Pharisees. As judges, indeed, it was remarked that they usually gave sentence with extreme rigour; but this proceeded not so much from cruelty as from their opinions respecting the absolute ability of all men to act uprightly if they chose; whereas the Pharisees, who contended that Divine aid was necessary to hinder men from falling, treated with comparative lenity the ordinary criminals brought before them. The Sadducees do not appear at any time to have been a very numerous sect. Their school was made up chiefly of the rulers and higher class, and their influence never equalled that of their more crafty and cautious rivals.

Besides the Sadducees and Pharisees, we find mention made in Scripture of the Essenes and Herodians, of the former of whom Josephus gives a very full account. They seem to have been pious enthusiasts, living in a community of their own, and exercising the most rigid abstinence from all the ordinary pleasures and recreations of the world. Marriages, according to this author, were not permitted among them, but they educated the children of others as their own, and infused into them at a very early period their own spirit and maxims. "They despise rulers, and possess all things in common; oil and perfume are prohibited their habitations; they have an austere and mortified air, but without affectation; they always dress in white. They have a steward who distributes to each what he wants. They are hospitable to their own sect, so that they are not obliged to carry provisions with them on their journeys." The moral code of the Essenes was exceedingly stern, and those who joined the society were bound rigidly to adhere to it: but their opinions touching the nature of the human soul were of a very singular kind. They believed it to be immortal, and that when the appointed moment arrived at which it behooved it to animate a body, it descended from the highest air, being drawn into the habitation prepared for it by an irresistible natural attraction. It escaped again from its prison as soon as the body died, and returned with inconceivable velocity to its abode on high.

The Essenes were perhaps the most religious and equitable party in the nation, yet they neither frequented the temple in Jerusalem nor offered bloody sacrifices. They observed the Sabbath-day, however, with great strictness, assembling in their own synagogues, where they seated themselves in order, the elder above the younger; while one of the company read the law, and another, distinguished for his learning, expounded. Their chief settlement was near Engedi in the wilderness of Jordan, and their numbers were calculated at about four thousand persons, but of their origin we know nothing. Divines have imagined, not without great show of reason, that among them John the Baptist received his early education.

So many opinions have been held relative to the peculiar tenets of the Herodians, and so little notice is taken of them in Scripture, that it is extremely difficult to come to any conclusion on the subject. That they owed their existence in some manner or another to Herod the Great all parties are agreed; but whether they were a Jewish sect, a sect of Platonists from Lacedæmon, or a mere club of politicians, is a question which has not been decided by commentators. Dr. Prideaux, however, appears to us to give the clearest and most satisfactory account of them. He holds that they were the creatures of Herod, native Jews, who held in imitation of their patron the following tenets:

1st.—That the dominion of the Romans over the Jews was lawful, and that it was their duty to submit to it.

2d.—That under existing circumstances they might with a good conscience follow many heathen modes and usages. There is no doubt whatever that such sentiments were held by Herod himself and that he openly acted upon them; and hence it is no unfair conclusion to draw that they were professed by the school which called itself after his name.

We cannot conclude this note without giving the reader a brief explanation of certain titles which frequently recur in reading the Bible. The terms to which we allude are Scribe, Lawyer, Doctor of the Law, and Rabbi; all of them possessing in a certain degree the same import.

The term Scribe is employed in the Old Testament in a variety of senses. Sometimes it denotes a public secretary, as at 2 Sam. viii. 17, where Seraiah is named as scribe to King David; sometimes as a master-master or other military

officer, as Jeremiah liii. 25, where a scribe is mentioned as one who superintended the military exercises of raw levies; sometimes as one skilled in the law and of extensive general wisdom; in which sense Jonathan, David's uncle by the father's side, is called "a counsellor," a wise man, and a scribe, 1 Chron. xxvii. 2; and Ezra is commended because he was "a ready scribe" in the law of Moses, Ezra vii. 6. It is in the latter sense only that this word is employed in the New Testament. Wherever it occurs in that volume it denotes one whose business it was to transcribe and expound the law to the people, and hence is to be received as strictly synonymous with the term Lawyer or Doctor of the Law. Thus, he who at Matthew xxii. 35 is called a doctor of the law is named at Mark xii. 28 as a scribe, or one of the scribes. The term Rabbi again was usually applied by the Jews to all persons of whose learning and acquaintance with the law, oral and written, they entertained a high opinion, and was not unfrequently given, as a mark of respect, by one man to another in ordinary conversation.

Subjoined is a general table of the offices and conditions of men of whom mention is made in Holy Scripture.

Patriarchs. Fathers of families, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his sons.

Judges. Temporary supreme governors, whether immediately appointed by God, or chosen by themselves to manage the affairs of the children of Israel.

Kings. Hereditary chief magistrates, either of the whole nation or, after the falling off of the ten tribes, of Judah and Israel.

Elders. Senators, the seventy or sanhedrim.

Officers. Provosts, sheriffs, or executioners.

Judges. Inferior rulers, such as determine controversies in particular cities.

Israelites. Hebrews descended from Jacob.

A Hebrew of Hebrews. An Israelite by original extraction.

A Proselyte of the Covenant. One who was circumcised, and submitted to the whole law.

A Proselyte of the Gate. A stranger who worshipped one God, but remained uncircumcised.

OFFICERS UNDER THE ASSYRIAN OR PERSIAN MONARCHS.

Tirshatha. A governor appointed by the kings of Assyria or Persia.

Heads of the Captivity. The chief of each tribe or family, who exercised a precarious government during the captivity.

UNDER THE GRECIAN MONARCHS.

SUPERIOR OFFICERS.

Maccabees. The successors of Judas Maccabeus, high-priests, who presided with kingly power.

UNDER THE ROMAN EMPERORS.

Procurators. Presidents or governors sent from Rome with imperial power.

Tetrarchs. Men who exercised kingly power in four provinces.

Preconsula. Deputies of provinces.

INFERIOR OFFICERS.

Publicans. Taxgatherers.

Centurions. Captains of 100 men.

ECCLÉSIASTICAL OFFICERS, RELIGIOUS SECTS, ETC.

High-priest. One who alone might enter the holy of holies.

Second priest or Sagan. One who supplied the high-priest's office in case he were disabled.

High-priests of the War. Persons set apart for the conduct of an expedition.

Priests, Levites. The sons of Aaron, divided into twenty-four ranks, each rank serving weekly in the temple.

Levites. Of the tribe of Levi, but not of Aaron's family. Of these there were three orders, Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites, descendants from the several sons of Levi.

Nethinims. Inferior servants of the priests and Levites (not of their tribe) employed in drawing water and cleaving wood.

Prophets, anciently called *Seers.* Men who foretold future events, and denounced God's judgments.

Children of the Prophets. Their disciples or scholars.

Wisemen. Persons so called in imitation of the eastern magi, or gentle philosophers.

Scribes. Writers or expounders of the law.

Disputers. Men who raised and determined questions out of the law.

Rabbins or Doctors. Teachers of Israel.

Libertines. Freed men of Rome, who, being Jews or proselytes, had a synagogue or oratory to themselves.

Gaulonites or Galileans. Men who considered it unlawful to obey a heathen magistrate.

Herodians. Men who shaped their religion to the times, and particularly flattered Herod.

Epicureans. A sect of philosophers who placed all their happiness in pleasure.

Stoics. Such as denied the liberty of the will, and pretended that all events were determined by fatal necessity.

Simon Magus. Author of the heresy of the Gnostics, who taught that men, however vicious their practice, would be saved by their knowledge.

Nicolaitans. The disciples of Nicolas, one of the first seven deacons, who taught the community of wives.

Nazarites. Men who, under a vow, abstained from wine.

Nazarenes. Jews professing Christianity.

Zelots. Sicarii, or murderers, who, under the pretence of zeal for the law, thought themselves authorized to commit outrage.

Pharisees. Separatists, who, upon the opinion of their own godliness, despised all others.

Sadducees. Men who denied the resurrection of the dead, angels, and spirits.

Samaritans. Mongrel professors, partly heathen, partly Jews, the offspring of the Assyrians sent to Samaria.

Apostles. Missionaries, or persons sent. They who were sent by our Saviour were from their number called the Twelve.

Bishops. Successors of the Apostles in the government of the church.

Deacons. Officers chosen by the Apostles to take care of the poor.

Angels of Churches. Their bishops.

Presbyters or Elders. An order of clergy next in rank to the bishops.

CHAPTER X.

Vision of Zacharias—Angelic Mission to Mary—Birth of John the Baptist—Of our Lord—Announced by Angels to the Shepherds; by a Star to the Magi—Massacre at Bethlehem—Flight of the holy Family into Egypt—Their Return—Christ among the Rabbins—His Baptism—Temptation in the Wilderness—Commences his public Career—Miracles at Cana, &c.—Objections stated and answered.

B. C. 1. TO A. D. 28.

WE have now arrived at a stage in our history when it becomes no longer necessary to follow the fortunes of any particular people, but to elucidate the progress of certain stupendous events, towards the accomplishment of which all that had hitherto occurred in the world was subordinate. We have seen with what patience Almighty God bore with the waywardness of his creatures, granting them from time to time revelations of his will, each more perfect than the other, and training them, as a father trains his children, for the last and greatest of his dispensations. We have beheld how he dealt with the patriarchs from age to age, till the spread of corruption became such as to render a more particular election necessary; and with what care he provided that the Mosaic covenant should be kept entire, till it had served its destined purpose. That purpose was now accomplished; for, not in Judea alone, but throughout the whole extent of the civilized world, men began to feel that they knew not God, and to long for a more intimate and spiritual communication with their Maker. To this end, indeed, the punishments of the rebellious Israelites had mainly contri-

buted, for whithersoever they went they carried the Scriptures along with them, which, being translated as already described into Greek, were studied more generally than they could otherwise have been. Thus were mankind gradually prepared for the coming of that Seed which had been promised to our first parents in Paradise, while the way was paved for the introduction into the world of *Him* "who hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

It was in the year from the creation 5411, from the building of Rome 753, Augustus Cæsar swaying the sceptre of the Roman empire, and Herod the Great filling the dependent throne of Judea, that a certain priest named Zacharias, while performing the duties of his office in the temple at Jerusalem, was addressed in a very remarkable manner by a very remarkable personage. Zacharias was in the act of burning incense within the sanctuary, the people offering up their customary prayers in the outer court, when an angel suddenly stood beside him, and informed him, in a tone of encouragement, "that his wife should bear a son," to whom his parents were commanded to give the name of John. "He shall be great," continued the heavenly messenger, "in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before *Him* in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zacharias, as may readily be imagined, was overwhelmed with awe and alarm, though his conviction that the being who addressed him was not of mortal mould sufficed not to dispel the doubts and misgivings to which a consideration of facts as they existed gave rise. His wife Elizabeth, a daughter of the house of Aaron, had never yet borne a child; she was now arrived at a time of life when in the ordinary course of nature such an occurrence was impossible; and Zacharias, more mindful of these circumstances than of the power of *Him* by whom nature's laws are given, ventured to demand some visible sign that God's precious promise would be fulfilled. The angel did not refuse to comply with this bold request. He granted to the doubting priest such a

sign as served at once to allay his suspicions and punish his want of faith, by informing him that he should continue dumb till after the birth now foretold should have taken place.

Zacharias accordingly went forth from the sanctuary deprived of the faculty of speech; he returned home in the same predicament, and so continued till the passage of time brought about the full accomplishment of the angel's prediction.

About six months after Zacharias had been thus honoured the same heavenly messenger was despatched to Nazareth, a little city of Galilee, where dwelt a cousin of Elizabeth's, a virgin, by name Mary, who was betrothed to a man of her own tribe, Joseph, by trade a carpenter. Joseph and Mary, though possessing few of this world's goods, were both of them lineally descended from King David; the former through Solomon, his eldest, the latter through Nathan, his second son by Bath-sheba.* They thus united in their own persons every legitimate claim upon the crown of Judah, but they lived in times when right had long given place to might; and neither of them appears ever to have conceived the idea of asserting the justice of their pretensions. Their royal descent, however, though unprofitable in a political point of view, rendered them fit instruments in the hand of God, who determined through Mary to fulfil the promise which he had made in successive generations to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to David.

It is scarcely necessary to state, that a custom prevailed among the descendants of Jacob of betrothing a bride to her future husband long before her age or other contingencies would permit the marriage to be consummated. In this situation Mary stood towards Joseph, her faith having been voluntarily pledged, though circumstances had hitherto prevented the engagement from being fulfilled, when the

* See the genealogical tables of St. Mark and St. Luke; the former of which refers to Joseph's, while the latter describes Mary's descent. In our version, indeed, St. Luke, like St. Matthew, appears to speak of Joseph's family only; but the error here is in the translation. Verse 23 of chap. iii., which in the English version runs thus, "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," ought to have been rendered, "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, but in reality the son (or grandson by the mother's side, for such was truly the case) of Heli."

celestial messenger suddenly entered her apartment, and saluted her as one "blessed among women." She was told that "she had found favour with God," that "she should conceive in her womb, and bring forth a son, whom she should call Jesus; that he should be great, and be called the Son of the Highest; that the Lord God would give unto him the throne of his father David; that he should reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that of his kingdom there should be no end."

Mary, as was natural in one conscious of perfect innocence, received the announcement with undisguised wonder; but when the angel went on to assure her that Jehovah himself would be the immediate cause of the phenomenon, every feeling of distrust and apprehension vanished. The pious maiden expressed her perfect readiness to become an instrument in God's hand for the furtherance of his great work; and the angel left her, not less grateful than astonished at her own good fortune.

The angel was scarcely departed when Mary, to whom he had communicated the fact of her aged relative's pregnancy, determined to visit Elizabeth without delay; for which purpose she proceeded to the hill-country, where Zacharias resided. She was received by Elizabeth with a hymn or song of holy triumph, in which the latter pronounced her to be blessed above her sex; and in the spirit of prophecy assured her that not a tittle of all that had been foretold by the heavenly messenger would fall to the ground. Mary replied to this salutation in a tone not dissimilar to that which marked her cousin's manner; and the friends dwelt together for nearly three months in harmony and peace.

In the mean while the hour drew nigh which was to witness the completion of God's promise to Zacharias; and Elizabeth, soon after her cousin's return to Nazareth, was safely delivered of a son. The friends and relatives of the child, being assembled, would have bestowed upon him the name of his father; but Zacharias, calling for his tablets, wrote the word John, which was of course received as the future appellation of the boy. Instantly the string of his tongue was loosed, and he uttered a song of mingled thanksgiving to Jehovah, and of prophetic declaration as to the fortunes and future office of his son.

Things were in this state when Joseph, finding himself so circumstanced as to carry into effect his marriage-contract with Mary, removed her to his own house ; where his feelings may be more easily imagined than described, when he discovered that she was considerably advanced in pregnancy. Being of a humane and amiable temper, and probably much attached to her, his heart revolted at the idea of exposing his frail bride to the fate which the law would have awarded ; but as he could not bear up against the disgrace which he believed to have been put upon his house, he determined to give her a bill of divorcement, and privately dismiss her. On the very night, however, preceding the day when this resolution was to have been carried into force, a vision from on high was vouchsafed to him, which at once explained the true state of the case, and determined him how to act. He received Mary as she deserved to be received, and treated her ever after not merely with kindness but with the utmost deference and delicacy.

The classical scholar need not be told that periodical enrolments of the citizens of Rome took place as well under the consular as under the imperial government. This practice, which had heretofore prevailed only among the Romans properly so called, Augustus extended over the entire compass of the empire ; and treating Judea rather as a province than a dependent kingdom, he had, some years prior to the occurrences recorded above, issued orders that there as well as elsewhere a census should be held. Circumstances, however, intervened to prevent the execution of the edict till the period when the Redeemer was about to appear in the flesh ; but the edict itself being then renewed persons of every family prepared to obey it. Joseph and Mary set out with the rest to be registered in the principal city of their tribe. The city in question was Bethlehem, the native place of David, the illustrious ancestor of their house, and thither the favourite pair turned their steps. They found it crowded with travellers, who occupied every place of accommodation, insomuch that they were compelled to seek shelter in that quarter of the inn or caravansary in which the cattle and horses were penned ; and there, "the days being accomplished that she should be delivered," the blessed virgin brought forth her son. "She wrapped him," says St Luke, "in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

Such were the circumstances of apparent obscurity under which the Son of God was ushered into the world : but the eventful hour of his birth was not therefore left without its attesting glories. To a band of shepherds who kept their flocks by night in the pastures near Bethlehem an angelic choir presented themselves, and communicated with songs of thanksgiving that a Saviour was born ; while a star or meteor appeared to certain magi in Parthia, which guided them after a long and toilsome journey into his presence. The shepherds hurried to the spot whither the angels had directed them, and beheld at once the infant Saviour in his lowly couch, while the magi in the same hour began a pilgrimage which came not to a close till many months afterward.

Meanwhile, the virgin, having bestowed upon her son the name which the angel had appointed her to give, went up at the stated period, the fortieth day after his birth, to present him as the law required in the temple. The infant was received by an aged priest named Simeon, who had long anxiously looked for the redemption of Israel, and who, taking him in his arms, became immediately sensible that his desire was at length accomplished. He poured over the child a hymn of holy exultation, blessing God that his " eyes had seen his salvation ; " while one Anna, an old and pious prophetess, joined him in his thanksgiving, and proclaimed to all the people of Jerusalem that the Deliverer was born.

These ceremonies being completed, Joseph and Mary, carrying the infant Saviour along with them, returned to Bethlehem ; where, for some cause not assigned by any of the evangelists, they fixed their temporary abode. They were thus circumstanced, when there arrived in Jerusalem a number of persons from a distant land, who made no secret that they had traversed a wide extent of country for the purpose of doing homage to an extraordinary child, which had been born King of the Jews. The appearance of these strangers, with the account which they gave of their business in the capital, attracted in no slight degree the attention of the Jewish people, among whom a conviction now generally prevailed that the eve of their deliverance was at hand ; and all classes, from King Herod downwards, were, to use the expressive language of St. Matthew,

"troubled." While the people, however, were excited to hope, Herod became the slave of a well-founded apprehension, that his throne was tottering to its fall; and, eager to free himself from the presence of so formidable a rival, he devised the following cruel expedient: having assured the magi that he, no less than they, was anxious to pay court to the infant monarch, he readily persuaded them to communicate to him, as soon as they should themselves discover, the abode of the heaven-appointed prince; and he at the same time held in readiness a band of assassins, to put to death the innocent object of his apprehension. The good providence of God, however, watched over its own especial instrument. The magi were, indeed, guided to the residence of Mary, by the same meteor which had drawn them from their homes; but their gifts and devotions paid, they were, by a vision, instructed to avoid Jerusalem on their return. They were not inattentive to the Divine message; while Joseph, warned by the same means of the perils which threatened the child, took Mary and her son by night, and fled into Egypt.

The return of the wise men into their own country without visiting the capital was no sooner communicated to Herod than his rage became furious in proportion to the increase of his fears; and, determined that the Messiah should not escape, he gave orders for the perpetration of one of the blackest deeds on record. A body of troops were despatched to Bethlehem, who put to death, without distinction, every child in the towns and villages near, from two years old and downwards. But the execrable massacre, though it failed to effect the end desired, was not permitted to pass unpunished. Herod, whose health had long been declining, was immediately smitten with a loathsome disease; of which, after enduring the most excruciating sufferings, he died on the fifth day from the murder. He left behind him three sons, among whom he divided his dominions; Archelaus succeeding to Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; Philip to Auranitis, Trachonitis, Panea, and Batanea; and Herod Antipas to Galilee and Petræa.

The arrangement which was pointed out in the will of Herod no sooner received the sanction of Augustus than Joseph was again warned by an angel to return to his native country. He immediately took the way to Judea,

but aware of the cruel disposition of Archelaus, he became apprehensive as he approached the frontier that the attempt made by the father might, with better success, be renewed by the son. He therefore directed his steps towards his original dwelling-place Nazareth, in the dominions of Herod Antipas, where for several years the holy family appear to have resided, unobserved and unmolested.

In the mean while a fresh revolution occurred in the government of Judea, in perfect accordance with the dying prophecy of Jacob; and the sceptre passed from the hands which had so long swayed it, never, in all human probability, to be restored. Archelaus, equally dissolute, though far less energetic than his father, drove the Jews into sedition, and a public complaint was, in consequence, brought against him before the Roman emperor. Augustus, already well-disposed to reduce Palestine to the condition of a province, esteemed the present an exceedingly favourable opportunity for so doing. He deposed Archelaus; sent him into banishment at Vienne, in Gaul, and placing his dominions formally under the superintendence of a Roman procurator, took away from the Jews even the shadow of independence which they had heretofore been permitted to enjoy.

Such was the political condition of his country, when the Saviour, now advanced to his twelfth year, went up with Joseph and his mother to attend the great festival of the passover, at Jerusalem. Of his proceedings there, no particular mention is made: but we learn that his parents were exceedingly alarmed when, on their return homewards, they missed him from their company, and notwithstanding a diligent search among the retinues of their friends and neighbours, failed to discover him. They hastened back to the capital in great dismay, which was converted into amazement, when they found him, not lost amid the labyrinth of buildings, but sitting in the hall of the sanhedrim in the midst of the most learned of its members, both hearing their discourses and propounding to them problems. Being questioned by his mother as to his motive for acting thus, and gently chid for the uneasiness which his conduct had occasioned, the youth replied in these memorable words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" an answer which, though to others it

might appear mysterious and unmeaning, Mary ceased not ever after to ponder in her heart. But though he thus accounted for his temporary absence, Jesus refused not to pay obedience to his earthly parent. He followed her to Nazareth, where he dwelt in obscurity nine years longer, working, as is believed, all the while, at the trade of his reputed father.

Time passed, producing its usual effects upon men and things, both at Rome and elsewhere. Our Saviour had attained to early manhood, when Augustus, to the inexpressible grief of the whole empire, died, and was succeeded by Tiberius, the son of his wife by a former husband, a prince endowed with dispositions widely different from his own. Various changes likewise occurred with reference to the management of Judea, which had been intrusted by Augustus, first to Coponius, afterward to Marcus Ambrius, and finally to Rufus, but which Tiberius now placed under the charge of Gratus; whom likewise he superseded, at the end of eleven years, to make room for Pontius Pilate. But it was not in such matters only that the lapse of time brought mighty things to pass. The period drew nigh when it behooved the Messiah to show himself in his true character to the children of Israel; and, as the prophets had foretold, his appointed messenger came forth "to prepare the way before him in the spirit and person of Elias."

We have taken no notice of the proceedings of A. D. 26. John the Baptist since the events attending his miraculous birth were described, nor are we in possession of any authentic materials from which this blank in our narrative might be filled up. By St. Luke, indeed, we are briefly informed, that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and that he was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel;" a form of speech from which some have drawn the conclusion that he received his early education among the Essenes.* There is certainly nothing impossible in this; nay, the austere habits which he afterward practised, together with the well-known readiness of the Essenes to receive among them such children as John,

* For an account of this and other sects, see the notes appended to the preceding chapter.

render the supposition extremely probable ; but, as the point at issue in no degree affects either the truth or consistency of sacred history, it were needless to argue it at any length in a work like the present. Let it suffice, therefore, to state, that in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, dating from the epoch of his assumption as coadjutor by Augustus, in other words, in the year from the foundation of Rome 780, John made his first public appearance in the character of a preacher of repentance ; choosing for the theatre of his pious labours the wild and romantic country through which the Jordan runs. The dress and mode of living of this extraordinary man were not less calculated than his doctrine to excite the astonishment and draw upon him the attention of his countrymen. His only robe was a garment of camel's hair, fastened round the loins by a leathern girdle, while his ordinary food consisted of the locusts and wild honey which abound in the districts of Palestine. His unchanging cry, moreover, was, that the people of the earth should repent, and make ready for the coming of the Messiah ; and he scrupled not to baptize in the Jordan as many persons, of all classes and stations, as sought that rite at his hands in a becoming spirit.* Among these were several Pharisees and Sadducees, as well as publicans and soldiers, the former of whom John sharply rebuked for their hypocrisy, while the latter were solemnly enjoined to use neither deceit nor violence in the practice of their several callings. Yet John was particularly careful that neither the object of his baptism nor the nature of his office should be mistaken. To the questions repeatedly and authoritatively put to him, whether he were the expected Christ, he on every occasion avowed that no such character attached to him ; but that he was merely "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

John had been thus employed several months, when
 A. D. Jesus, after bidding farewell to his mother, passed
 27. through Judea to Bethabara, where his great pre-

* The rite of baptism was familiar to the Jews, being practised as well on the admission of converts ~~into~~ ^{into} the church of the tabernacle, as by prophets of righteousness among their followers.

cursor was established. On his part there was no need either of confession or of baptism; but partly with a view of setting an example to others, partly that the most minute ceremony that attaches to the assumption of the prophetic office might not be omitted, Jesus, not less than the publicans and Pharisees and soldiers, besought John to confer upon him the right of ablution. The Baptist would have declined the charge, alleging that he himself stood in need of baptism from the hands of the Messiah, not the Messiah from him; but being overborne by the reasonings of the Redeemer, he at length consented. It was a ceremony attended by consequences of more than common import. As they ascended up from the bed of the Jordan, "the heavens," says St. Luke, "were opened; and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased." Thus was the Redeemer consecrated, as it were, to the momentous work before him; and his first trial, with its issues, gave promise of the grand result which should ensue upon its accomplishment.

There was an ancient custom prevalent among the Jews, which required every man, previous to his public appearance as a prophet or teacher of righteousness, to devote a certain space of time to fasting and solitary contemplation. To this, as well as to the ceremony of baptism, the Saviour esteemed it no degradation to submit; and he directed his steps, in consequence, deep into the wilderness, as soon as he had parted from the Baptist. The place whither he wandered is still pointed out to the traveller in these regions, and if the tradition which assigns to it its character be trustworthy, it were difficult to conceive one better calculated for the purposes to which it was turned. "A miserable dry place it is," says Maundrell, "consisting of high rocky mountains, and torn and disordered, as if the earth had here suffered some great convulsion, in which its very bowels had been turned outward." Yet from the tops of these crags a landscape is presented which includes the mountains of Arabia, the Dead Sea, and the plains of Jericho; thus rendering the horrors of the defile itself doubly impressive, on account of the contrast which is presented between them and the surrounding scenery.

Our Saviour had wandered amid these gloomy passes a space of forty days, during which neither bread nor water passed his lips, when the power which had hitherto sustained him being for a space withdrawn, he began to experience the extremity of hunger. At this critical juncture there approached him an aged wayfaring man who, like himself, appeared to have lost his way among the intricacies of the desert. The stranger was the old serpent who had beguiled the first Adam in Paradise, and who now, under a different disguise, but with equal subtlety, strove to beguile the second Adam also. Having saluted the Messiah with much apparent respect, he ventured to suggest that for one circumstanced as he was to suffer even a moment's uneasiness in consequence of the absence of common food, was in the highest degree unreasonable, seeing that he need only command the stones that lay around to become bread, and they would obey. Jesus, however, put him to silence by quoting a sentence from the Bible, which asserts, "that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Baffled in this attack, Satan resolved next to try how far the vanity of his intended victim might be worked upon. There was a tradition current in Judea that the Messiah would come direct from the clouds of heaven, and the Devil, aware of the pretensions of Jesus, strove to lead him into the performance of an act more in agreement with the idle expectations of his countrymen than with the real character of Christ. With this view he bore him through the air, planted him on the top of the parapet which begirt the temple, and urged him by all means to disclose himself to the multitude by casting himself headlong to the ground. Jesus met the deceiver here again by quoting, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." There yet remained one other point on which to assail the firmness of his adversary. Ambition might, perhaps, have charms in the eyes of one who had shown himself proof against the cravings of bodily appetite and of vanity; and Satan, once more transporting him to the summit of a lofty mountain, caused a magnificent vision to pass before his eyes. The phantoms of a thousand empires, with their wealth and power, were conjured up, and it was added, "all these will I give to thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Hitherto the Redeemer had rejected the

allurements offered firmly but meekly ; his indignation was now raised, and he replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The Devil felt the full force of the rebuke : baffled and thwarted in all his designs, he fled from the presence of the Son of God, and angels from the courts of heaven "came and ministered unto him."

Having thus triumphed over the great enemy of mankind, our Redeemer proceeded to show himself in the capacity of a teacher of righteousness to his countrymen. With this view he passed through Judea, attracting wherever he went the notice of the people, and rendered doubly conspicuous in consequence of the testimony of John, who pointed him out as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." He was followed by two pious men, Andrew and the evangelist St. John, both of whom had previously attended upon the Baptist ; and the little party was soon afterward joined by Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. These were the first who openly avowed themselves disciples of Jesus, and professed their belief in him as the long-expected Messiah.

Attended by these his faithful companions our Redeemer arrived in Nazareth, the town where his early life had been spent, and where his relatives resided. Here his public teaching appears in some degree to have begun ; for here first we are informed of his entering into the synagogue and expounding those portions of Scripture which had more immediate reference to himself ; but the inhabitants of Nazareth disdained to receive instruction from one whom they accounted the son of an humble carpenter. He was in consequence roughly handled by the crowd, who thrust him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which it stands with the design of casting him down ; but Jesus, having remarked that a prophet has no honour in his own country, passed through them unharmed and departed.

Not long after this he was bidden with his mother and his five disciples to a wedding-feast at Cana, a city of Galilee, situated at an easy distance from Nazareth. As it formed no part of the religion which he came to inculcate to destroy the kind and social feelings of our nature, Jesus readily accepted the invitation ; and there, for the first time,

he gave proof of the authority with which he was endowed over the elements. It was discovered that there was a scarcity of wine, of which a considerable portion was needed in the celebration of a Jewish wedding; and his mother, not doubting that he possessed the power to make good the deficiency, made him acquainted with the circumstance. He scrupled not to perform a miracle, though its sole object was to promote the innocent festivity of his friends. The servants were commanded to fill with water six cisterns which had been placed in an inner chamber for the purposes of ablution, and the water became, they knew not how, converted into wine. But greater objects than this were to be attained by the Messiah, and to these he forthwith addressed himself.

A. D. 28. After a brief sojourn at Capernaum, our Saviour, followed by his disciples who had now largely increased in numbers, went up to Jerusalem, with the design of being present at the passover. He proceeded immediately towards the temple, the sanctity of which he found utterly violated, in consequence of the prevalence of a shameful custom which had gradually crept in. The reader need scarcely be reminded, that by the terms of the Levitical law, offerings of different kinds of beasts, and birds, and wine were required at stated periods, both from the people at large and from individuals. These, which it was usual at first for each devotee to bring with him from the country, were latterly supplied by merchants in the city; and now the priests, for their own gain, permitted a market to be openly held within the precincts of the temple. Here were traders seen to mix familiarly with worshippers, interrupting the devotions of such as were sincere, while the noise of brawling and disputation broke in upon the voice of prayer, and the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep were mingled with the sound of psalmody. The indignation of the Saviour was roused by such a spectacle. Arming himself with no other weapon than a whip of small cords, he commanded the crowd to disperse, "overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of such as sold doves," and there were in his presence so much of dignity and power, that the most impious quailed beneath it. Merchants, brokers, and traders fled before him, and "his Father's house" became once more "a house of prayer."

It would have been very remarkable had his conduct on this occasion failed to excite both the wonder and fury of the mob. His authority to act thus was rudely demanded, to which he replied by a metaphor having reference to his own death and resurrection; but he steadily refused to gratify the impertinent curiosity of the priests by performing any miracle in their presence. Nevertheless, he failed not, even now, in making more converts, among whom was numbered Nicodemus, a chief man in the sanhedrim, who visited him by night, and avowed his belief that Jesus could be no other than a teacher sent from God. To this well-meaning but timid Pharisee our Saviour explained, that the period was fast approaching when a new church, or kingdom of God upon earth, would be erected, into which admission was to be obtained only by the regeneration, or second birth of water and the spirit.

In the mean while, John the Baptist, having removed from Bethabara to Enon, declaimed there, as he had done elsewhere, against the immorality of the age. Among the individuals whom he hesitated not to reprove, Herod Antipas, the seducer of his own sister-in-law, was one; but the ears of royalty are not accustomed to listen with patience to the language of reproof. John was arrested and cast into prison; where, after again bearing testimony to the character of Jesus, he ended his days. He was murdered by order of Herod, to gratify the malice of Herodias, and to exhibit how rigidly the king could fulfil an engagement, no matter whether its conditions were lawful or the reverse.

John was yet in confinement when our Saviour, after abiding in Jerusalem till the close of the feast, went forth "to teach and to preach throughout Judea." By the poor and the lowly he seems to have been every where received with respect; for to them he spoke of matters to which they were well-disposed to listen; but the Pharisees and lawyers bore not with patience the exposure of their hypocrisy and the condemnation of their vices. The influence of these was, however, too great for him to withstand. Having sojourned about seven or eight months in Judea, during which period he performed many miracles, and his disciples baptized many converts, he was compelled to retire into Galilee in order to escape the malice of his enemies, whose hour of triumph was not yet come.

He was prosecuting this journey, when, arriving near Sychar, or Sechem, the ancient capital of Samaria, he sent his followers into the city to purchase bread, and sat down himself close to Jacob's well. It chanced that a woman of loose character came out to draw water, with whom Jesus entered into conversation; during which she expressed extreme surprise that a Jew should so far forget his pride as to ask drink at the hands of a Samaritan. Having explained to her that the distinction between nation and nation would speedily be done away, our Saviour proceeded to inform her of some of the most important transactions in her own life, and summed up all by avowing that he was the Messiah. The woman, greatly astonished at his discourse, ran into the city, and so wrought upon the curiosity of her kinsmen that they besought Jesus to abide some time among them. He did not refuse a compliance with their request; but spending two days at Sychar, he succeeded by his discourses and miracles in converting to the truth not a few of its inhabitants.

From Sychar the Redeemer proceeded to Cana of Galilee, where a Roman centurion, having heard of his extraordinary powers, besought him to save the life of an only son, who lay even then at the point of death. Jesus delayed for a moment or two to notice the wretched man's petition; but the prayer being repeated in more urgent terms than before, he made answer, "Thy son liveth." The father's faith was great; he found on returning home that it had not deceived him, and he and all his household became converts to Christianity.

It is not necessary to give in detail an account of the many miracles which from this time forth were performed by the blessed Redeemer. On one occasion, when certain of his disciples had toiled all night in vain, they drew up from the sea of Galilee at his bidding so great a quantity of fishes that their vessels scarcely sufficed to contain them: on another, a demoniac was cured in the synagogue, the devil bearing witness to the divine nature of him who expelled him: on a third, the mother of Peter's wife, who lay dangerously ill of a fever, rose in perfect health at his bidding, and ministered unto him; while lepers were cleansed and paralytics healed, by a word or by a touch. But even these acts of mercy failed to inspire the rulers of

the nation with other sentiments than those of envy towards Jesus. Because he presumed to say to a miserable invalid, whose relatives, unable to make their way through the crowd into our Saviour's dwelling, let him down upon a couch through the roof, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," they accused him of blasphemy; and the miraculous recovery of the man, though it occurred before their eyes, sufficed not to make them retract the accusation. In like manner, because he condescended to eat at the table of his disciple Matthew, whither a number of publicans were invited to meet him, they avowed their conviction that he could be no teacher of righteousness, otherwise he would not have incurred the hazard of so great a pollution; while his disregard of fasts established not by Divine but by human authority was recorded as a heavy ground of accusation against him. Yet our Saviour was not the less zealous in "performing his father's work." He exposed with fearlessness the hypocrisy of these "whited walls;" showed that by their "traditions they made the law of God of none effect;" and proved that the attempt to impose upon his early followers austerities unauthorized by nature or religion could not fail of producing the worst possible effects. Thus with the single-minded and sincere among the people at large he daily increased in favour; while to the rulers, the Pharisees, and the more rigid of their flatterers he became an object of unmitigated abhorrence.

We are not unaware that to the passages of Scripture from which the contents of the present chapter are derived many and grave objections have been offered. The whole history of our Lord's miraculous conception and birth has, for instance, been condemned as fabulous, while to several of the miracles performed during his public career even nominal believers sometimes object. In like manner the references made, more particularly by St. Matthew, to the writings of the prophets, have been condemned as not merely inaccurate but injudicious; while the Messiah himself is accused of acting without consistency, in refusing to permit his claims to be brought forward by his avowed adherents, yet advancing them boldly to the people of Samaria. These, with the disagreement which is supposed to exist between the actual situation of Jesus of Nazareth and the prophetic paintings of the seers of old, are con-

sidered the most serious stumblingblocks in the way of rational inquirers, and to have confirmed in their skepticism many who were well disposed to embrace the Christian religion. It remains for us to notice these several objections, with as much perspicuity as is consistent with the narrow limits of our present work.

The narrative of our Lord's miraculous conception, and of the events which preceded and followed his birth, is recorded with so much perspicuity and distinctness by St. Luke, that there is no other ground on which to refuse to it our assent than by denying either the authenticity or divine origin of the tract in which it is contained. This, however, can be done only by asserting that the entire volume which we call the New Testament is a forgery. For the account given by St. Luke at length of the matter in question is in so many instances indirectly confirmed by his brother evangelists, that the testimony of the one cannot be rejected without rejecting that of the others also. We express ourselves thus, because the theory which would receive St. Luke's Gospel denuded of the first two chapters is totally inadmissible; inasmuch as there exists not a single ancient manuscript in which these chapters are omitted; and hence the sole question at issue appears to be, whether or not the four Gospels, with the history of the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, are worthy of evidence or the reverse?

With respect to the authenticity of these tracts, that is to say, with respect to their existence at the period when they profess to have been written, it were difficult to imagine any historical fact admitting of more satisfactory proof. They are quoted and referred to not by Christians only, but by a succession of Jewish and heathen writers, some of whom flourished in the days of the apostles themselves; while others lived but a generation or two after their decease. Thus, among Christians, we have Polycarp, Ignatius, Hermas, Clement of Rome, and Barnabas, all of them contemporaries with St. Paul and St. John; who are succeeded by Papias, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Hegesippus, and so on down to Tertullian, Clement, Origen, and Eusebius. The whole of these fathers have left greater or lesser portions of their works behind, in which are numerous quotations from each of the four Gospels, as

well as from the Acts and the Epistles. In like manner, we find that neither Celsus, the avowed enemy of the faith, who flourished towards the close of the second century, nor Porphyry, who wrote in the third, nor the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, who died A. D. 363, ever called in question the authenticity of the Gospel histories. On the contrary, it is against the matters recorded of Christ and his apostles, not against the genuineness of the narratives in which these records are embodied, that the attacks of one and all are directed. Here is proof sufficient that during the first three centuries of the Christian era, the authenticity of the tracts composing the New Testament was universally admitted. But if the case was so then, a different style of reasoning, adopted at a later period, is surely not to be regarded. If Celsus and Porphyry saw no cause to deny that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each wrote the treatise attributed to him, it is ridiculous to be swayed by the objections of skeptics of our own age, or of an age a century or two younger than our own.

But granting that these narratives were really written by the men whose names they bear, how is it possible to admit as truths details which contradict all experience, and stand opposed to the known laws of nature? We answer, that the details deserve to be received as truths, only provided it can be shown that successfully to propagate falsehoods under the circumstances in which the evangelists stood would have been not only difficult but utterly impossible.

Let it be borne in mind that the Gospels, like the five books of Moses, profess to be addressed to men all of whom lived at the period when the miracles described were performed; and that the miracles themselves are uniformly represented to have been wrought openly and in the sight of the world. The conversion of the water into wine, for example, the healing of the leper, the paralytic, and the demoniac, are each of them stated to have occurred in the presence of crowds; while it is repeatedly declared, that the doctrine not less than the actions of the individual who effected these cures produced an extraordinary sensation throughout all Judea. Again, as we proceed onwards with the sacred narrative, we learn that the same Jesus who cleansed a leper by a touch raised by a word a dead man from his

grave, whose body had lain so long in the charnel-house as to have already undergone some degree of decomposition. Is it conceivable that any sane person would give publicity to such details as these in the country and age where they are asserted to have taken place had there been no foundation for them?

But this is not all: the objects of the devisers of these monstrous fables, if fables they are, deserve not less than their own personal history our most serious consideration. As to the personal history of the first teachers of Christianity, it presents a spectacle never witnessed before or since of a number of men voluntarily exposing themselves to ignominy, persecution, and death, for the single purpose of gaining converts to a religion which inculcated upon its votaries the purest morality of conduct. It is no uncommon thing for ambitious persons to dare or to suffer much, provided there be a prospect before them of personal recompense or aggrandizement; but on the supposition that Christianity is a fable, what imaginable motive could actuate its early professors to seek its propagation? They not only never obtained, but they never desired wealth, or power, or dignities. Of the future life of which they spoke to the multitude, they must have been aware of the non-existence; is it credible that under such circumstances they would have adventured upon the Herculean task, knowing that their sole reward would be persecution and death? Again, when we consider the condition in life of these bold innovators—that they were all, or nearly all, men of obscure origin, of limited education, and simple habits, our astonishment at their audacity is increased tenfold; while the number of persons employed in the diffusion of what is presumed to be a fable renders the whole matter perfectly inconceivable. Who ever heard of five hundred or one hundred men combining for the invention of a lie, yet arranging their story so well as to hold all of them the same language, no matter how distant the one from the other, or into what circumstances thrown? Can it be credited that one or two out of so great a number would have failed to expose the rest?

Nor is the perfect success of these obscure teachers over the prejudices and customs of mankind to be kept out of view. What other power, besides that of the Most High,

could have enabled the preaching of a few humble peasants to revolutionize the most polished nations of Europe and Asia, opposed as it was in every quarter by the custom of ages, and the full influence of the magistracy? He who can believe that the gospel would have spread as it did but for the direct interposition of God in its favour must be content to be branded as a far more credulous person than the humble believer in the miraculous nativity of our Lord.

We have said that the object of the first teachers not less than their personal history deserves the strictest attention in prosecuting an inquiry like the present. The religion which they endeavoured with so much earnestness to establish has been admitted by its bitterest enemies to contain the purest and most perfect code of morals that was ever given to the world. By Christianity alone has it been pronounced more noble to forgive than to avenge an injury; by Christianity alone are the very thoughts of the heart regulated, and the important lesson taught that the readiest means of adding to our own happiness is to increase the happiness of our neighbours. What thinking person will admit that men capable of inventing so glaring a falsehood as the history of Jesus and his followers is represented to be would think of turning their own crime to such an account as this?

On these grounds, and on many others to which our space will not permit us to advert, we are compelled to believe that the books which contain the history of Jesus Christ speak the truth; and as the fact of his miraculous conception rests upon the same authority with other wonderful events in his career, we see not how it is possible to refuse to it our assent.

But the vision of angels vouchsafed to the shepherds—and, above all, the appearance of the star in the east—how are these things to be accounted for? The vision of angels is a plain statement, advanced by an inspired historian, and is no more to be disputed than the account given by the same writer of the angelic visit to Mary; while the appearance of the star in the east, with the results arising out of it, need not produce uneasiness in any mind, however sensitive. It is a well-established fact, that there prevailed at this time, not in Judea only, but in every country whither

the dispersed Israelites had betaken themselves, a strong persuasion that the promised Seed, so long expected, was about to arrive. The magi mentioned by St. Luke were evidently natives of some part of the great Assyrian empire; and being in possession of the Book of Daniel, the archimagus of their forefathers, they doubtless encouraged in common with their countrymen the expectation to which we have just alluded. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at if they, when they beheld the halo which surrounded the angels, diminished by distance to the size of a small star, should immediately conclude that so remarkable a phenomenon betokened the birth of the promised Prince; while it is in no degree derogatory to the honour of Almighty God that he should permit a recurrence of the luminous body to direct them to Bethlehem. The way was thus paved for a future spread of the gospel in the regions whence they came; and whatever tended to "make straight the paths of the Lord" was well worthy to receive a portion of the care of Him with whose free grace the scheme of man's redemption originated. This, indeed, appears to be the true explanation of the story; for that a new star or planet was created, or that such, if created, could go before any travellers, and settle over any particular spot, is manifestly impossible.

We pass now to other supposed difficulties, such as are furnished by the description of the temptation in the wilderness, by the prevalence of demoniacal possessions, by the misquotations of the evangelists, and the discrepancy which is presumed to exist between the condition of the Messiah of the prophets and that of Jesus of Nazareth. Of the first of these we have nothing further to say than that, like other wonderful narratives in the New Testament, it must be credited on the authority of those who record it. No good end seems likely to be served by asking why such a scene occurred; but if the question be put it may suffice to answer, that probably some such triumph over Satan was necessary in order to repair the breach occasioned by Satan's triumph in Paradise; while the facility with which the evil one transported our Lord from point to point, and the readiness with which the elements became subservient to his purposes, are facts to be accounted for only by referring them to the permission of the Most High. With respect again to the

contradiction which is supposed to be implied in the attempt on Satan's part to overcome the virtue of a being like our Saviour, that may be said to originate wholly in the conceptions which we form to ourselves of the extent of the Devil's knowledge and his own opinion of his own powers. Perhaps he knew not that Jesus was other than a mere man, though aware that he was in a peculiar manner favoured by Jehovah; and it might be with the view of ascertaining whether or not he was really the promised Seed that the prince of the power of the air assailed him. But as these are mere conjectures, and as on such a subject we are quite incapable of offering more than conjectures, the wisest course doubtless is, not to pry into the matter too deeply, but to leave this, like many other truths both in nature and religion, to be explained when "the mortal shall have put on immortality, and faith is swallowed up in vision."

It has sometimes been urged even by professed Christians, who affect to see in the reality of demoniacal possessions difficulties wholly insurmountable, that in numbering them in the list of diseases healed by Christ, the evangelists only gave way to a common but harmless prejudice. Now in opposition to this, it is necessary to observe that a being incapable of guile neither could nor would give encouragement to a falsehood, no matter how commonly received, or how harmless in its consequences; while, if our Lord foreknew, as he doubtless did, the abuses which afterward arose out of it, he would be still less disposed to sanction the belief in an affection which had in reality no existence. Again, demoniacism is by the sacred writers invariably put in opposition to insanity, paralysis, and other diseases; is it to be credited that they would have acted thus had no such possessions prevailed? That the worst uses were made of these cures in after-ages of the church is indeed most true. To expel a devil became a favourite miracle with those who possessed no power miraculously to cure other maladies; but the case was not so in the days of our Lord and his apostles, when, if there be any truth in Scripture, demoniacal possessions were extremely frequent. Why they were so we are not called upon to explain; though the confessions of the impure spirits to the authority and divine nature of Him who expelled them render at least a feasible solution of the problem by no means diffi-

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cult. Other prophets and holy men had healed the sick and raised the dead ; it was reserved for the Son of God alone to command unclean spirits, and to convey a like power through the magic influence of his name to his own immediate followers.

The next objection which presents itself depends upon the references made by St. Matthew to certain expressions in the writings of the old prophets, which expressions were not, it is asserted, designed by the prophets themselves to apply to the circumstances of the Messiah. Of this nature is the memorable quotation from Jeremiah, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not ;" which, though St. Matthew interprets it as relating to the massacre at Bethlehem, referred, in point of fact, to the approaching captivity of the tribes : while Isaiah's declaration to King Ahaz, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," appears totally without point, if it be understood as descriptive of the birth of Jesus. Now it is to be observed, that the former of these expressions suffers no violence whatever in being applied as the evangelist has applied it. Whatever the prophet's immediate object might have been, the prediction itself seems quite as german to the massacre at Bethlehem as to the captivity ; indeed, when the situation of Bethlehem, the burial-place of Rachel, is considered, we shall not go too far if we assert that in all probability Jeremiah himself designed his words to bear a twofold interpretation. Be this, however, as it may, as the term Rachel is used in other cases as a type of the mother of Judah in general, the evangelist has committed no mighty crime in introducing it where he has done ; for the expression *thus was fulfilled*, or, that it might be *fulfilled*, signifies no more, according to the Hebrew idiom, than "thus was verified" or "this event corresponded to" the prediction about to be quoted. The case is somewhat different with respect to the striking declaration of Isaiah, which, as Archbishop Usher has ably shown, if it had not referred to the promised Christ, would have been utterly without effect in comforting Ahaz.

The prophecy itself is in these words, "Hear ye now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary man,

but will ye weary my God also ! Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign (shall work a miracle) ; Behold a virgin (of the house of David) shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good." These words, according to the learned primate, were addressed to such of the royal family as were present, in grievous alarm of immediate destruction by the confederate kings, whom they assured that their apprehensions were groundless, because the promise of the Messiah to spring from the house of David would certainly be fulfilled, and fulfilled in the extraordinary manner which the prophet had just described. Then, pointing to his own son, *Shear-jashub*, who stood beside him, the prophet went on to say, that before *that child* had arrived at the years of discretion the enemies which then threatened Jerusalem would be destroyed. The intermediate words, "Butter and honey shall he eat," the archbishop interprets as a declaration, that though the birth of the Messiah should be miraculous, in all other respects he would be supported by the common food, and be liable to the common infirmities of children. To our minds, at least, this explanation seems perfectly satisfactory : for the word Immanuel, which the prophet assigns as the future name of the virgin's first-born, refers, like many others in Scripture, to his office ; while the quibble upon the Hebrew word *Alma*, that it signifies either a virgin or a young married woman, is beneath notice. For a young married woman to bring forth a child was surely no such uncommon event as to render the announcement of it in any degree consolatory to Ahaz and his family.

We come now to the last objection stated ; namely, that the actual career of Jesus of Nazareth corresponded neither with the declarations of the prophets nor with the anticipations of the Jewish people relative to their Messiah. Instead of ascending the throne of David and establishing a permanent kingdom, he spent a short public life amid insults and privations, and ended his days by the hands of the executioner.

This is doubtless true ; but let the prophets be read with attention, and it will be seen, that "to that end was he born." It was foretold of him that he should act in three distinct capacities—as a prophet, a priest, and a king ; but

as a prophet and a priest in the first place and as a king afterward. He acted as a prophet when he went through Judea preaching the doctrine of repentance and turning men from "dead works unto faith;" he discharged the duties of a high-priest when he offered up the great sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and he entered into his kingdom and established it never to be overthrown, when, after his ascension, his apostles began to make converts. It is true that in the descriptions of his regal state language is usually employed more suitable to the pomp and parade of an earthly potentate than to the dignity of a religious sovereignty; but the language of prophecy is always figurative, and its images are necessarily drawn from things with which the outward senses are conversant. Besides, it is an error to assert that the Messiah is more frequently or more plainly described as a triumphant monarch than as a suffering man. Of the great antiquity of Isaiah's writings no doubt can exist; and upon his representation, were there none besides in the Old Testament, we might be content to rest our faith.*

* There are other petty objections to which the history of our Lord's early proceedings is exposed; as, for example, that his employing his supernatural power to supply with more wine those who had already partaken largely of the juice of the grape was unworthy of a Divine Being; and that his language to his mother, both on that and other occasions, was the reverse of respectful. To the first of these it is sufficient to reply, that excess at a Jewish wedding was a thing utterly unknown, the governor or ruler of the feast being appointed for the express purpose of marking, by a well-known signal, when each guest had drunk enough; and that, as the feast itself lasted many days, a large portion of wine was needed. To the second, our answer must be confined to a positive denial of the charge. Though in the English translation the expression "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" may seem harsh, in the original it implies simply that the absence of wine ought not to give uneasiness to any one besides the founder of the feast; while the word rendered "woman," signifies "lady," or any other term of profound respect and love. It was used by subjects to their princesses, by slaves to their mistresses, and by children to their parents.

CHAPTER XI.

A Paralytic healed—Miracle of the withered Hand—Sermon on the Mount—Widow's Son restored to Life at Nain—John the Baptist's Mission—The Female pardoned—Miracle of the Swine—Miracle of the Loaves—Death of the Baptist—Jesus walks upon the Sea—Is present at the Feast of Tabernacles—Raises Lazarus from the Dead—Objections stated and answered.

A. D. 29.

THE second year of our Lord's public ministry had arrived, and Judea was every where filled with his renown; when, on the return of the season of the passover, he again went up to keep the feast with his disciples at Jerusalem. On the north-east side of the city lay the pool of Siloam, surrounded by an hospital of five porticoes, called Bethesda, which, at certain seasons, possessed a healing virtue of no ordinary kind. It is stated by St. John that an angel went down and troubled the pool, and that whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had; and the porches adjoining were, in consequence, continually crowded with miserable expectants of the heavenly visit. It chanced that our Saviour's attention was attracted to a poor paralytic, who for the space of three years had vainly striven to avail himself of the sanitary qualities of the fountain. He approached the invalid, and equally admiring his patience and commiserating his misfortune, commanded him to "take up his bed and walk." Unwonted vigour was immediately communicated to limbs which had long ceased to do their office; the paralytic arose from his couch, lifted it on his shoulders, and walked through the most public streets towards his home. But he was not permitted to pass thus. It was the Sabbath-day, and the Pharisees stopped him, angrily accusing him of a breach of the law of God; and when the patient replied by stating that he only obeyed the instructions of the personage by whom his malady had been removed, their indignation was transferred from him

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to Jesus. The Messiah, however, took no further notice of their anger than by proving that the leisure of the Sabbath can never be more worthily employed than in performing acts of mercy and charity; and claiming to himself more decidedly than he had yet done the honour of a divine descent, "My Father worketh hitherto," said he, "and I work;" in other words, the good providence of my Father is exercised equally on the Sabbath as on other days, and I, who partake of his nature, am equally entitled to "heal on the Sabbath-day." As might be expected, such a defence served but to increase the malice of his enemies, "who sought to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his father, making himself equal to God."

How long our Saviour remained at Jerusalem on this occasion we know not, further than that we find him again exposed to a charge of Sabbath-breaking, because his disciples gathered and rubbed out a few ears of grain while passing through a cornfield; but it is probable that he quitted the capital as soon after the conclusion of the feast as circumstances would allow. His course was directed to Galilee, where, in one of the synagogues, he restored to a man afflicted with a withered hand the perfect use of his limb; but the hostility both of the Pharisees and Herodians became in the end so galling that he withdrew privately, accompanied by his disciples only, towards the seaside. Retirement however was not now attainable by one in his circumstances. Great multitudes from almost every district of Palestine followed him, whose sicknesses he freely healed, causing the very touch of his garment to bring with it relief, till the crowds became at last so oppressive, that to escape from them he took refuge in a fishing vessel which his disciples had been previously instructed to hold in readiness. By this means he escaped to a mountain which stood considerably apart, where, after a night spent in prayer, he made that distribution of his followers into different classes which has ever since prevailed in the constitution of the Christian church.

With the dawn of the morrow the multitude once more appeared, and he delivered to them the splendid discourse, generally known as "Christ's Sermon on the Mount." It accords not with the plan of our present work to offer any

analysis of this oration ; but we may be permitted to observe, that in real dignity of sentiment, in absolute purity of morals, and in simplicity and perspicuity of style it stands without a rival in any language. It produced, moreover, a very powerful effect upon those who listened to it ; for we read that "the people were astonished at his doctrine, because he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Having descended from the mountain and healed a leper at its base, our Lord returned to Capernaum, where he exercised his miraculous powers by restoring to health the servant of a devout Roman centurion. This done, he proceeded towards Nain, a pleasant place on the Kison, situated about half way between Nazareth and Mount Tabor ; at the gate of which he was met by a funeral-party, bearing the corpse of a widow's only son to the grave. Jesus was much affected by the spectacle of the mother's grief ; and commanding the procession to halt, he cried, with a voice of authority, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Instantly the soul of the dead youth returned ; and the multitude exclaimed, with one accord, "that a mighty prophet was risen up among them, and that God had visited his people."

While our Saviour was thus employed, a circumstance befell, which, like every other attending the career of the Messiah, was not without its weight in furthering the great scheme of conversion. John the Baptist, who still lingered in his dungeon, either fearful that some new claimant of the mediatorial office had arisen, or desirous of allaying the doubts of his own disciples and of transferring them to Christ, sent two of them to demand whether Jesus "were indeed he that should come, or whether they ought to look for another." The messengers arrived at a moment of all others the best calculated to serve the Baptist's purpose. Our Lord was in the act of realizing that vision of the prophet where the Messiah is represented "as taking men's sicknesses upon him, and bearing their infirmities," and he accordingly, instead of giving a direct answer to the message, desired John's disciples to report to their master what they saw and heard. No reply could have served its purpose better. The misgivings of the Baptist, if indeed he really entertained any, were effaced, and his disciples became from that hour firm believers and disciples of Christ.

From this time forth, the history of our Saviour's life contains little besides a continued narrative of wonderful deeds, pious and profoundly wise discourses, privations, persecutions, insults, and sufferings. Dining with one Simon, for example, in Nain, a wretched outcast from female society rushed into the apartment, fell at Jesus's feet, and bathed them with her tears; an incident from which our Lord took occasion to show that his was a religion of mercy and reconciliation: while his business, after quitting that place, was to go round other parts of Galilee instructing the people in their duty and healing their maladies. As a necessary consequence, his conduct exposed him more than ever to the hatred and envy of the Pharisees, who now accused him of casting out devils by the influence of Beelzebub, and again demanded of him some proof that he was what he professed to be; but to these accusations and querulous demands Jesus paid no other heed than by referring them to the history of Jonas, thus intimating that his claims, like those of the prophet, would be best established after he should have undergone all that was reserved for him.

Having thus rebuked the Pharisees, and instructed his mother and nearest relatives that to do the work of his Father was to him more acceptable than any other employment, Jesus, finding the crowd press rudely upon him, once more withdrew to the shores of the sea of Galilee. Here he embarked in a fishing-vessel, from which he taught the people in parables, comparing the propagation of the gospel to the sowing of a mustard-seed, and to the effect of a piece of leaven thrust into a heap of flour; after which he desired his disciples, to whom he interpreted his several apologues, to push for the opposite coast. They obeyed him; but ere half the passage was made good, a violent storm arose, by which the frail bark and its crew were placed in imminent danger. Jesus, however, who had fallen asleep, probably overcome with his late exertions, was no sooner aroused than he rebuked the tempest, and to the inexpressible amazement of all on board there was a profound calm.

Arrived in the country of the Gadarenes, Jesus was met by two demoniacs, who, from their exceeding ferocity, were objects of terror to all that passed that way. The wretched beings no sooner beheld him than the evil spirits by which

they were possessed began to deprecate his anger, entreating him either not to cast them out, or, in the event of his refusing to comply with that request, to sanction their passing into the bodies of certain swine, which in great numbers were feeding near. Our Saviour commanded them to quit their human victims, but offered no opposition to their prayer relative to the swine; which, becoming instantly maddened, ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished. A great effect was produced throughout the entire district by the announcement of these occurrences. The people, stupified with terror, came to him in a body, and besought him to depart from among them; and he, not caring to continue where his presence seemed so little desired, repassed the lake, and returned to Capernaum.

Many memorable deeds were performed by him here, among which two stand peculiarly distinguished; namely, the recovery of a woman from an obstinate disease by a touch of his garment, and the restoration to life of the daughter of Jairus, a chief ruler of the synagogue. But neither these, nor the renewal of sight to the blind, nor the casting out of devils, nor the loosing of the tongue of the dumb, produced the smallest faith in his divine mission among the haughty Pharisees. Once more they accused him of holding communion with Beelzebub, and harassed him to so great a degree that he took refuge in Nazareth. But the prejudice which had before operated against "the carpenter's son" was not yet removed, and our Lord found but few and thankless auditors in his own country.

Driven forth from Nazareth, the Messiah made a progress through most of the towns and villages of Galilee, preaching the gospel and healing the diseases of the people; but the field of exertion was so great, that ceaseless as his efforts were they failed in accomplishing their full end. He accordingly deputed to his disciples in a particular manner the care of publishing the tidings of salvation to the Jews, investing them, as an evidence of their Divine commission, with absolute authority over diseases and infirmities; and they went forth in pairs to teach in all parts of Palestine, where their brethren dwelt, leaving their lord to continue his pious labours in Galilee.

It was at this juncture that Herod Antipas, beguiled by Herodias and her daughter, caused the Baptist to be

beheaded in his dungeon ; an event of which the intelligence no sooner reached Jesus, than he deemed it prudent to retire from the dominions of the tyrant. With this view he directed his disciples, who had returned to him rejoicing in the success of their mission, to prepare with secrecy the means of passing the sea ; but the multitude who delighted in his discourses soon traced their progress, and overtook the holy company in the deserts of Bethsaida. Here our Lord miraculously fed them all, though amounting, besides women and children, to full five thousand men, from five barley loaves and two small fishes ; a transaction which inspired them with so much zeal, that they would have forcibly proclaimed him King of Judah ; but having dismissed his followers in their ship, with instructions to proceed to Capernaum, he quietly withdrew himself, and spent the early watches of the night in prayer.

The disciples had accomplished about half their voyage, when, amid the darkness of a storm which beat heavily against them, they beheld the figure of some one walking on the sea. Their astonishment was, as may be imagined, excessive, and they cried out in terror, believing that it was a spirit ; but Jesus no sooner made himself known to them than their terror was changed into joy ; and Peter, ever impetuous and rash, sprang overboard to meet his Master. Peter's faith was not, however, capable of supporting him amid the dangers by which he was surrounded ; and had not the hand of his Lord been extended to save, he would have perished ; but the Messiah, greatly rebuking his distrust, led him back to the vessel, which, immediately on receiving its Divine freight, reached the port whither it was destined.

Our Lord's arrival at Capernaum no sooner became known, than he was surrounded, as heretofore, by crowds of the suffering and the poor ; and numberless persons, afflicted with every variety of disease, were healed. The multitude likewise from Bethsaida speedily overtook him, full of curiosity touching the means by which he had eluded their search ; but though in this respect he refused to gratify them, he gladly availed himself of the first opportunity to show that the food supplied in the wilderness was no more than a type of the meat which shall endure to all eternity. He spoke now of his own death, and of the conse-

quences which were to follow, in terms so explicit, that even of his disciples some were offended ; and, to use the honest and undisguised expression of the evangelist, "went back and walked no more with him."

In this manner our Lord passed his time, healing the sick, preaching the doctrine of repentance, and gradually infusing fresh light into the minds of his faithful followers, though exposed wherever he went to the artifices of the Pharisees. It would appear, indeed, that as his hour drew nigh, it behooved him to guard with greater and greater care against the malice of his enemies ; for we find him now, towards the close of the second year of his ministry, seeking shelter in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon ; where, after some little demur, he expelled a devil from the daughter of a Syro-phenician woman. He now retraced his steps, however, to Decapolis and Dalmanutha, healing, as he proceeded, a deaf man, and again feeding four thousand people upon "seven loaves and a few fishes ;" after which he navigated the Lake of Gennesaret, from south to north, and landed once more at Bethsaida. Here he restored sight to a blind man, after he had led him forth from the city, the inhabitants of which were by no means disposed to treat him with respect ; and then turning his face towards the north, betook himself to the coast of Cesarea Philippi. It was at the latter place that his disciples communicated to him the strange reports which were circulated respecting his nature and office ; that his body was animated by the soul of Elijah ; that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead ; and there also Peter, speaking in the name of his brethren, confessed that Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah, the Son of the living God. Our Lord, so far from being offended with the confession, pronounced Peter blessed because he had made it, and pronounced that he should have the honour of first laying the foundation of a church, against which the powers of hell should never be able to prevail.

Perceiving from the reply of Peter that the faith of his disciples was well grounded, our Lord went on to explain to them through what means the kingdom of God upon earth behooved to be established. He stated explicitly that his own death by the hands of a public executioner was unavoidable ; and showed that the moment was fast approach-

ing, when the mighty penalty due to men's transgressions must be paid upon the cross. The disciples were not yet sufficiently enlightened to listen with patience to a prognosis so different from that which they had been accustomed to encourage; and Peter, again taking the lead, reproved his master for thus disparaging his own greatness. But on this occasion Peter himself received the check, which he desired to impose upon the Redeemer. He was sharply rebuked for his worldly-mindedness, assured that visions such as he conjured up were unreal, and told in direct terms that persecution, much labour, and a violent death were the sole honours to which, in this life, the followers of God's Christ would be advanced; but that the hour should come, when for these temporal sufferings an eternal recompense would be given; and that even of those surrounding the Messiah at the moment, there were some who should survive to witness his entrance into glory.

A. D. There is good reason to believe that declarations
 30. such as these failed not to affect with profound melancholy, the imaginations of men who still fondly dreamed of earthly crowns and sceptres. Partly to dispel this uneasy feeling, partly to cheer them through their future difficulties, our Lord, not many days after the preceding conversation, took with him Peter, James, and John, and ascended to the top of a mountain. Here a scene was exhibited before the admiring eyes of the disciples such as confused their very intellects by reason of its splendour; "for the form of his visage was changed, and his raiment became white as snow;" and Moses and Elias appeared visibly beside him. A cloud at the same time overshadowed the party, whence issued a voice which proclaimed that "Jesus was the Son of God;" and the disciples, falling with their faces to the earth, felt in every pore that the Divinity was palpably present. But the glorious vision soon faded away. It gave them, indeed, a glimpse of the splendour of a better world—but it gave them no more; for, on again raising their heads, Moses and Elias had vanished, and they alone were with their master on the barren hill. Our Lord, satisfied with the effect produced, charged them to keep the matter secret till after his resurrection; and they descended the mountain together, to endure once more the vexations of an evil and envious world.

The first spectacle which presented itself to our Saviour on his arrival in the plain was a crowd of persons gathered round others of his disciples, and demanding of them to perform a task, for which their want of faith incapacitated them. A father had brought his child to be delivered from the influence of a devil; but the disciples, though they strove to gratify his wish, failed in doing so. What they, however, could not accomplish their Divine Master performed. He expelled the devil, restored the child in health to his parent, and showed his wondering followers that if they desired to possess the degree of faith requisite in such cases, they must seek it by fasting, and deep and frequent prayer.

Jesus now turned his face in the direction of Capernaum, and took advantage of the journey to instruct his followers more fully than he had yet done, as to the nature of the kingdom which he was about to establish. He explained to them that he who would be greatest there must be the most prompt to serve his brethren here, not in the comparatively unimportant affairs of the body, but in those of the soul; he enforced upon their minds lessons of brotherly love, of mutual forbearance, and the forgiveness of injuries; and he assured them, that to the eye of the Most High no sight is so acceptable as that of a contrite sinner turning from the evil of his ways. Neither was he neglectful of the great duty of obedience to the civil governments under which men live. By performing a miracle for the purpose of procuring as much money as was needed to meet the demands of the public taxgatherer, he distinctly showed that to every ordinance of man we are bound to be subject, "for the Lord's sake."

The feast of Tabernacles was at hand; and the family and connexions of Jesus, beginning at last to entertain a hope that he was really the Messiah to whose coming their wishes pointed, would have gone up with him publicly, at the manifest hazard of a tumult, to assert his claim to the throne of David. Jesus, however, saw through their motives, and despised them. He refused to act the part which they would have had him act, and permitting them to set out under the idea that he designed not to follow at all, he took the road privately and at his own leisure towards the capital. The rout which he followed led him

through a town of Samaria, the inhabitants of which refused to accommodate him for the night ; which so irritated his disciples, that they besought him, in imitation of Elijah of old, to call down fire from heaven and destroy the place. But the Redeemer took no further notice of the request than to reprove it, professing, that he came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" and he followed up this humane declaration by healing ten lepers, only one of whom possessed gratitude enough to thank his gracious Benefactor.

We have said that our Lord distributed his disciples into different classes, investing each class with a degree of power and dignity peculiarly its own. Thus he appointed twelve individuals, who, as long as the Messiah continued upon earth, filled the place of priests or presbyters in his church ; while seventy were separated from the mass of the converts to attend, like the twelve, upon his person, in a somewhat subordinate capacity. His employment of the twelve to preach the gospel has already been described ; and that the seventy might be made aware of the duties hereafter to be discharged by them, they likewise were on the present occasion sent out, two and two, throughout Judea.

While his followers were thus occupied, Jesus himself arrived at Jerusalem, where, during the earlier part of the feast, he kept himself concealed. Much speculation was in consequence excited, for men of all parties expected him, and a thousand rumours were afloat as to his ultimate designs ; but before half the period allotted for the festival was expired, that is to say, about the fourth day from its commencement, he unexpectedly appeared in the temple, and began to teach. His doctrines on this as on other occasions produced a very powerful effect, more especially when, taking advantage of certain ceremonies which accompanied the offering of the great sacrifice on the last day, he assured the multitude of a palpable effusion of the Holy Spirit at no distant date ; but though the people crowded and admired, the chief priests and rulers listened with increasing animosity to his discourses. Nevertheless their malevolence, though excited to a high degree by the boldness with which he spoke, led to no positive results, for "his hour was not yet come," and the very officers of the sanhedrim refused to arrest him.

Our Lord continued at Jerusalem during the remainder of the festival, teaching always in the most public places, and performing many extraordinary works. It was on this occasion that he reprov'd the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who demanded his sanction for the stoning to death of a woman taken in adultery, by desiring him who was unconscious of a similar crime to cast the first stone ; and it was then, also, that he explicitly assured the multitude, that "before Abraham was, I am." In like manner he showed, by the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan, that the claims of friendship and neighbourhood extend beyond kindred and country ; while to his own disciples, who came back elated with their triumphs over devils, he pointed out, that to ensure their own personal salvation was to them of much greater consequence than the exercise of the highest order of miraculous powers. But the festival ended, he withdrew from the noisy capital, and took up his residence for a little space at Bethany, in the house of certain of his friends, named Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

His visit paid, and the family being fully instructed that other matters besides those of time require attention, our Saviour returned into Galilee, where he delivered to his disciples the simple yet sublime prayer which has ever since borne his name. He followed up the gift by an assurance that "God is always more ready to hear than we to pray ;" and he exhorted all who call themselves by his name to be constant and earnest in their devotions. In other respects, moreover, his proceedings fully corresponded with the previous course of his life. Indifferent to worldly honours, he refused to arbitrate between man and man in cases where property was at issue, yet he freely expelled a devil from a poor demoniac, and restored to the dumb the faculty of speech. In like manner he took advantage of the reported massacre by Pontius Pilate of certain Galileans, and of the death of eighteen persons by the fall of the tower of Siloam, to impress upon the minds of his hearers the doctrine of God's perfect justice ; drawing as his great moral, that such accidents were designed as warnings to the survivors, who, equally with their less fortunate countrymen, were amenable to God's severest judgments.

Having thus spent the interval between the feasts of Tabernacles and of the Dedication, our Lord, on the arrival

of the latter, went up once more to Jerusalem. Here his first occupation was to give sight to a man born blind; but the cure having been wrought on the Sabbath-day, the Pharisees, as usual, pronounced it the act, not of a prophet, but of a sorcerer. A scene of curious altercation ensued between the sanhedrim and the object of Christ's mercy, which ended in the excommunication of the latter; or, as it is expressed by the evangelist, his expulsion from the synagogue: but the poor man, meeting his benefactor soon afterward, and being assured by him that he was really the Messiah, instantly believed and worshipped him.

It is not necessary to follow in detail the order of our Lord's proceedings during his present visit to Jerusalem. Let it suffice to state, that after again reproving the Pharisees as "blind leaders of the blind;" after again refusing to supply the incredulous with other proofs than were already before them of his Divine commission and authority; after warning the people generally that the election of their nation had ceased, and that to strive for an entrance at the strait gate was the wisdom of all mankind alike; after showing by his conduct towards publicans and sinners that he came to seek and to save such as were lost, and pointing out in the parables of the Lord of the Vineyard, and Lazarus and Dives, that God is no respecter of persons; after conveying these and many other important lessons, to the soundness of which repeated miracles bore testimony, our Lord again quitted the capital and visited Perea. Wheresoever he went the same sentiments flowed from his lips. He warned the multitudes who attended him, that his disciples must be prepared to endure the scorn and hatred of the world; he repeated the observations which he had previously made, as to the necessity of self-denial, charity, and humility; he placed the law of marriage on its natural and just basis, into which the corrupt priesthood had made numerous innovations; and he demonstrated, by his reply to a wealthy youth who would have joined his company had no sacrifice been required, that converts who calculate the comparative gain or loss of their conversion are not admissible into the kingdom of Christ. Such is a summary of our Saviour's career during the space of several weeks, part of which he spent at Jerusalem, part in the district beyond Jordan.

He was thus situated when intelligence reached him that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was at the point of death. Our Saviour's predilection for Lazarus was so well known, that his disciples naturally concluded that no time would be lost in hastening to his assistance; and their surprise was in consequence great, when they found that their Master took little or no notice of the announcement. Nevertheless our Lord acted now as he ever did, with strict attention to the interests of Christianity. He was desirous of exhibiting to the whole Jewish nation one proof more striking than had yet been afforded of his own superiority over nature, and he delayed with this view to commence his journey till the death of Lazarus had been distinctly ascertained. He was glad, however, of the opportunity which the present moment afforded of still further enlightening his disciples on the subject of life and immortality; and their own lurking ambition was not slow in leading to the desired conversation. It chanced that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, mistaking the import of his doctrine, besought him to grant to them the highest dignities about his court; and our Lord readily availed himself of their error to communicate both to them and to their companions that the kingdom of which he was appointed ruler lay beyond the grave.

Our Lord passed through Jericho, where he restored sight to the eyes of two blind beggars, and dined with a wealthy publican, by name Zaccheus. He proceeded next to Jerusalem, delivering as he went along a parable prophetic of his own fate and of the punishment which was destined to overtake the Jews as soon as they should have filled up the measure of their crimes; and he arrived at Bethany four full days after Lazarus had been committed to the grave.

Great numbers both of men and women were there, which the custom of condoling with the survivors had brought together; but to the voice of consolation both Martha and Mary were deaf, and their grief seemed but to increase on beholding the Messiah. They ran to meet him, cast themselves at his feet, and in bitterness of heart exclaimed, "Lord, if thou hadst been here our brother had not died." The Redeemer was deeply affected. He was moved even to tears; but having explained to them that

he was the resurrection and the life, he desired them to lead the way towards the spot where they had laid their brother.

As the company moved forward to the tomb of Lazarus, a variety of speculations passed from one to another. "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind," said they, "have caused that even this man should not have died?" and their surprise that he had not done so became the greater when they beheld the agony of sorrow under which he seemed to labour. But our Lord's tears were shed, not like those of other men, who weep because their brother man is removed, but partly through the operation of feelings purely and exquisitely disinterested, and partly in obedience to the universal law of sympathy, to which the Son of God disdained not to be subject. In this order they reached the tomb, a cave hollowed out in a rock, over which a huge fragment of stone was laid. Jesus immediately commanded the massive door to be rolled back, and standing on the brink of the cavern, exclaimed, with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." There was a silence among the crowd so profound that the very waving of the grass might be heard. Men gazed at Jesus with mingled awe and astonishment, as if doubting whether or not his extraordinary mandate would be obeyed; but their amazement was only to be equalled by their horror, when they beheld the dead man rise from the earth, arrayed in his shroud, with legs and arms swathed in linen, and the napkin around his head which the piety of his surviving relatives had bound there. We cannot pretend to describe the effect produced upon all who witnessed that spectacle. Nothing at all resembling it had ever been seen before, and even such as still refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ, departed with a firm conviction on their minds that he was no common man. But as far as his own immediate happiness was concerned, no good resulted from the miracle. The rulers and chief priests no sooner became aware of it than their fury was roused to a higher pitch than before, and Jesus was in consequence driven to seek shelter at Ephraim, a little town in the tribe of Benjamin.

The objections to which the contents of the preceding chapter are liable resemble in so many particulars those advanced and refuted already, that we deem it unnecessary

to notice more than one or two of the most prominent, among such as appear to possess some degree of novelty. Under this head we by no means include any one of the many miracles performed by our Lord. These, however extraordinary, must all be received as they are given, on the sole authority of the inspired historians; for it is no more possible to account for the very least of them upon what are called natural principles, than it is practicable on the same principles to account for the greatest. It is true that the raising of Lazarus, the restoration to life of the widow's son of Nain, the feeding of five thousand men upon five barley loaves, and the walking on the sea, all strike our imaginations with greater force than the renewal of health to a paralytic; yet, when the means by which each of these great effects was produced comes to be considered, the one will appear just as wonderful as the other. We can no more explain how it came about that, at the bare command of Christ, a man born blind received sight, and a person afflicted with dropsy became whole, than we can account for his absolute authority over the grave and the wildest elements of nature. The case is somewhat different with respect to one or two matters which have been felt as difficulties even by the most pious; but which, in reality, involve no contradictions, as the following statements may prove.

The story of the pool of Siloam, with its healing qualities, has occasioned considerable uneasiness to such as have looked into the pages of Josephus without discovering any intimation there that the existence of these qualities was known to that writer; while the evangelist's statement, that an angel came down visibly from heaven and troubled the water periodically, it seems a hard matter to credit. When did this custom commence, and at what moment did it terminate?

It appears to us, that there is no occasion to receive the evangelist's statement touching the angelic visit in a strictly literal sense. The Jews, as is well known, especially in the latter times, attributed every fortunate event which befell them individually or collectively to the interposing influence of a good spirit; whereas, every accident or calamity was referred to the operation of a devil or malignant demon. Now if the evangelist wrote in the idiomatic style

of his country, his expression as to "an angel coming down from heaven" will signify no more than that at certain seasons the fountain became unaccountably agitated, and that its waters then possessed the quality of removing the disease of the afflicted person who first, after their agitation, plunged into them. No doubt the miracle still remains as it was before. Siloam was not a medicinal spring, otherwise it would have been equally effective at all seasons, in particular, and only in particular, cases: but there is no necessity to multiply miracles, and hence we are disposed to regard the notice of an angelic visit as a mere fashion of speech peculiar to the age and country of the inspired writer. With respect again to the period of time when the fountain first exhibited its sanative qualities, we confess ourselves quite incompetent to give any account of it; and we are equally unable to state at what precise era it ceased to possess them. There is good ground, however, to assert that Siloam had long been permitted to act towards the Jews the part of a standing memorial of God's care over his people; and if the case was so, we see no reason to doubt that its healing qualities were coeval with the establishment of the Jewish capital in its vicinity. Thus, though Josephus, who wrote for the instruction of the heathen, and who was more regardful of their prejudices than became a Jew, makes no mention of the cures wrought by dipping in Siloam—he records of it what is no less surprising, and equally conclusive of the fact that its waters were used by Jehovah in the manner to which we have referred. In his speech delivered during the last siege of Jerusalem, in which he advocated the cause of submission to Titus, that historian says, "The springs, which when in your power were dry, now flow plentifully for Titus; for ye know that before his coming, Siloam, and all the other springs that were without the city, did so far fail that water was sold by distinct measures, but they so abound to your enemies, as not only to suffice for themselves and for their cattle, but even for watering the gardens. The same wonderful sign ye also formerly experienced, when the forementioned king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) made war against us, took the city, and burned the temple." Now if the waters of Siloam were thus made the instrument in the hands of God to punish the rebellious Jews, by supplying the wants of their

enemies, why might they not likewise possess the qualities ascribed to them of healing one sick person miraculously at every passover. Nor is it very difficult to surmise the exact period at which these supernatural qualities were removed. They were, doubtless, taken away when the theocracy utterly ceased, and the people, by their rejection of the Messiah, proved themselves unworthy of its continuance.

Of the message of John the Baptist, which has given umbrage even to Christians, we have already said enough, when recording the fact itself, to satisfy every impartial inquirer. The Baptist, conscious that his days were numbered, took the method described above to allay the doubts of certain of his own disciples, who, with natural but mistaken partiality, preferred the teaching of their own master to that of Christ; at least we cannot well account for his conduct, under all circumstances, on any other or more rational grounds. But should any of our readers lean to the notion that a lengthened captivity had caused the Baptist to lose sight of Jesus, or that his ideas touching the kingdom of the Messiah were, like the ideas of the Jews in general, far from being correct; as there is nothing impossible in either theory, nor at variance with the truths of revelation, there is no reason to be assigned why one or other should not be adopted. We indeed give the preference to the first theory; but the last, equally with it, accounts for the Baptist's inquiry.

We pass by the remarkable narrative of Christ's transfiguration, because we see in it nothing more startling than in the history of the same Divine Being when controlling the elements, or baffling the wiles of Satan in the desert. It is indeed abundantly striking, that the two men with whom he held converse on the Mount were, with the exception of Enoch, the only human beings of whose natural deaths no distinct record remains. One, indeed, we are assured, passed visibly from earth to the heavenly Paradise in a chariot of fire, sent down for his conveyance; while the other, as his body was never found, is believed by not a few, both of Jews and Christians, to have been in like manner translated. But be this as it may, of God's power to reanimate the body at any moment no doubt can exist; and hence these two prophets may have taken part in the

memorable drama, only because they were the greatest that had flourished under the Mosaic dispensation. With respect again to the object of that glorious vision, it has already been fully stated. Our Lord took this method of cheering the drooping spirits of his followers; and the remembrance of what they then witnessed was to them as a pole-star in many a trying and difficult scene in their after-life.

It has sometimes been asked why our Saviour should have hidden such transactions from the Jewish people generally; and why he refused, though repeatedly requested, to exhibit more irrefragable proofs of his right to the title of the Messiah: we answer, that had he complied with the unreasonable demands of the chief men, one or other of two consequences must have followed. Had they credited the sign granted, as their expectations relative to the Messiah were of the grossest and most grovelling kind, nothing could have hindered them from breaking out into rebellion against the Romans, and the very object which our Lord came to attain would have been defeated; had they persisted in attributing the miracle, be it what it might, to the power of magic, they would have stood exactly as they did before. Besides, with proofs so numerous as his daily proceedings afforded, why demand more, or why should he be expected to comply with the demand whose entire life was one continued series of great actions. We see no force whatever in such an objection as this. But whence came it about that his own disciples, the very men most favoured, and constantly in attendance on him, entertained to the last notions so erroneous respecting the object of his coming and the nature of his kingdom.

There is nothing either to alarm or surprise the most tender-minded Christian in this. Let it be borne in mind that the followers of our Lord were taken, not from the great and the learned, but from the humble and unlettered. Let it be further borne in mind, that the whole Jewish nation, high and low, rich and poor, priests and people, teachers and taught, were equally impressed with the conviction that the Messiah, whenever he came, would openly ascend the throne; that he would lead their armies to battle, defeat their enemies, and make them masters of the world. Now that the twelve should cling to this belief, even after they had learned to regard Jesus of Nazareth as

the promised Christ, is by no means surprising; for no truth can be more firmly established, than that prejudices are usually deep-seated in proportion to the absence of culture in the minds over which they have once prevailed. It is vain to demand why our Lord did not at once deliver the minds of his followers from this delusion. The whole of God's dealings with mankind demonstrate, that he never has acted and never will act violently upon their wills or capabilities; and our Saviour's conduct towards his disciples formed no exception to this grand and immutable law. As the Father gradually prepared the world for the coming of the Son and the reception of that religion which he was sent to establish, so the Son gradually prepared his disciples to receive the full blaze of light, which was not communicated till after his ascension.

But granting all this to be correct, are there not one or two circumstances recorded of our Saviour totally at variance with the line of his general character; and is it not a fact, that the four evangelists do not always tell the same tale, or relate it after the same fashion. The permission given to the devils to take possession of the herd of swine, for example—how is that to be accounted for; and whence is it, that while one evangelist speaks of two blind beggars cured at Jericho, another makes mention only of one?

It is worthy of remark, that the history of the miracle which ended in the destruction of the swine proves no more than that our Saviour did not interfere to prevent the spirits expelled from the men from entering into the bodies of the beasts. They were not sent thither by him, and hence he is no more to be blamed for the consequences of that movement than Almighty God is deserving of blame because he does not interfere to lessen the spread of a pestilence, or frustrate the effects of an earthquake or an inundation. But if this be not sufficient to vindicate the character of our Lord, other and still better reasons may be assigned for his present proceeding. The swine were either the property of the Jews, multitudes of whom dwelt in that district, or they belonged to the heathens. If owned by Jews, then was their destruction a merited punishment upon men who, in spite of the prohibition of the law, trafficked in the unclean animal; if by the heathens, as they were doubtless kept in mockery of the Israelites, and used in the most

impious and impure sacrifices, there seems to be no impropriety in supposing that Christ permitted them to perish for the purpose of vindicating the honour of his Father, whose religion their proprietors daily insulted.

The last objection which we propose to notice at this stage of our history is that which depends for weight upon the trifling incongruities which here and there prevail in the narratives of the several evangelists. To our minds the fact that such incongruities exist, so far from telling against the credibility of the inspired penmen, speaks volumes in its favour: for men combining to devise a fable would guard against such an accident with the utmost care; whereas several biographers, writing from memory, at remote distances, and without the smallest communication with one another, could scarcely avoid committing the crime of which the evangelists are accused. One, it is said, makes mention of only a single blind beggar cured, the other speaks of two; what then? It is evident, from the terms employed by both historians, that Bartimeus was a well-known character; it is equally evident that his companion in misery and fellow-recipient of Christ's bounty was an individual of no note. Is it wonderful that this stranger should have been passed by altogether in one account, though the other chances to notice him? Now to this, and to no more than this, will all the contradictions and discrepancies discoverable in the pages of the several evangelists be found to amount. In the case of St. John, indeed, something more may be said. He was confessedly acquainted with the works of his brother-biographers; to which, indeed, his gospel may be taken as a supplement; surely it is the reverse of surprising to find that he should have recorded one or two circumstances of his Master which are recorded nowhere else. But it is needless to pursue the argument further. The slightest care in collating gospel with gospel will demonstrate that in no material or important question are they contradictory one of the other; while the mere mention of something by one writer of which the other was either ignorant or forgetful furnishes, as we have already said, the strongest testimony to the veracity of all.

CHAPTER XII.

Our Lord goes up to Jerusalem in Triumph—Again purges the Temple—Pardons Mary Magdalene—Celebrates the Last Supper—Is betrayed, crucified, and rises again—His Ascension—Objections stated and answered—General View of the Doctrines and Constitution of the Primitive Church.

A. D. 31.

OUR Lord continued at Ephraim till the time of the pass-over drew near, when he again made preparations to go up, as heretofore, to Jerusalem. To reach the city it was necessary to pass through Bethany, where Jesus became once more the guest of Lazarus and his sisters, and where he was treated, as he had ever been, with the utmost deference and hospitality. It was on this occasion that Mary anointed with spikenard the feet of Jesus, wiping them at the same time with the hair of her head; and that Judas, the future traitor, affected to condemn the deed as one of shameful extravagance. But our Lord vindicated Mary, by explaining that the ceremony just performed was preparatory to his burial, while he refuted the hypocritical argument of Judas by stating, that "the poor they would always have with them, but him they would not always have."

After spending the night at Bethany, Jesus set forward towards Jerusalem, attended by a large concourse of people, who had been brought together partly to see Lazarus, the living dead, partly to behold the prophet at whose bidding a departed soul had returned. There was a little village on the side of Mount Olivet called Bethphage, round which numerous dates and fig-trees grew, distant about a mile or something less from the capital, and inhabited principally by the families of the priests. Near Bethphage Jesus halted, while two of his disciples were directed to go into the hamlet, and bring from thence an ass's colt, "on which man had never yet ridden." They did so; and having cast their upper garments over the animal, mounted their master upon it, and advanced in a species of triumphal procession, the air

ringing with the shouts of thousands, who hailed him as the long-expected Messiah. At every step, moreover, the number of his adherents increased. Men, women, and children rushed forth to meet him, strewing their garments and green branches of palm-trees in his way; and he entered Jerusalem amid a universal outcry, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

It was not to be expected that the Pharisees and chief priests would regard this movement with indifference. Concealing their personal hatred of Christ under the guise of apprehension for the peace of the capital, they required our Lord to reject the plaudits of the multitude; but he answered, that "should these cease their hallelujahs, the very stones in the walls of their houses would proclaim his praise." Then turning to his disciples, after he had gazed steadily and mournfully over the city, he exclaimed, "Would that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and hem thee in on every side, and destroy thee, with thy children within thee; and shall not leave, of all thy gorgeous buildings, one stone upon another." How fearfully this prediction was verified at the capture of Jerusalem by Titus every reader of Josephus must be aware.

By this time the entire city was in a state of violent commotion, men demanding, one from another, "Who is this?" while others shouted aloud, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth, of whom Moses spake." But if the tumult was great previous to his arrival in the temple, it increased fourfold when he there restored sight to the blind and strength to the lame; indeed, he was now openly saluted on all sides as "the Son of David," and blessed as the King who "came in the name of the Lord." Nor was it among native Jews alone that the admiration of Jesus rose to the highest pitch; at each of the great festivals, a number of proselytes, as well as numbers of the tribes in dispersion, came up to perform their religious duties in the temple; and these, no less than his countrymen, flocked round him in crowds. Nevertheless our Lord, though he refused not the homage thus offered, soon alienated the

minds of the giddy multitude by speaking to them, not of empire or worldly grandeur, but of his own coming sufferings ; and even the voice from heaven, which came to cheer him amid the gloom occasioned by such anticipations, failed to convince them of their error. They could not comprehend how the Messiah, whom they expected to reign for ever, should "be lifted up and die upon a cross ;" and when towards evening he disappeared from among them, all their enthusiasm in his favour had evaporated.

Our Lord returned after sunset, on the third day of the week, to Bethany ; and early in the morning of the third, he again took the road to Jerusalem. Being affected with hunger, and espying a fig-tree by the wayside, he approached it with the design of gathering fruit, but the tree, though in full leaf and of extreme beauty, was barren. Jesus permitted not the opportunity to pass of exhibiting before his disciples an emblematical representation of the consequences of a life uselessly spent ;* he cursed the tree, which instantly began to droop, and within the short space of twenty-four hours withered away.

This done, our Lord proceeded to the temple, which had again been polluted by the presence of traders in full business, and which he again purged, with an authority not to be resisted. It is worthy of remark, that on the present occasion his language is more explicit as to his own Divine nature than he had formerly deemed it expedient to use. He no longer spoke of his *Father's* house ; but affirmed in direct terms, "*My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.*"

Equally provoked at the boldness of our Lord's proceedings, and jealous of his influence with the people, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees all combined to entrap him, if possible, in his speech : each party was, however, baffled in its turn, till there arose, last of all, a lawyer, who hoped to confound him in the decision which he should make as to the relative merits of the several laws. But our Lord's answer was so just and so worthy of the nature to which he laid claim, that the very tempter felt its force in his inmost heart, and expressed himself in terms

* There was in this transaction likewise a manifest reference to the fate of the Jewish nation ; that barren fig-tree of which he formerly spake as cumbering the ground ; Luke xiii. 6-9.

which called forth from Christ a declaration that he was not far removed from the kingdom of heaven.

It now became our Saviour's turn to put questions to these self-appointed catechists, and he demanded from them an explanation, why David, of whom they spake as the father of the Messiah, should himself speak of the same Messiah as his Lord? They could not solve the problem; but anxious to hide their own shame, and eager at all events to get rid of Jesus, they affected a concern for his safety, and advised him to quit the city. "Herod," said they, "seeks to kill thee." "Tell that fox," replied Christ, "lo, I cast out devils, and perform other miracles, to-day and to-morrow; and the third day I shall be perfected by suffering, for it cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem." Then, as if overcome by the feelings excited by so melancholy a consideration, he exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a bird gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" But though deeply compassionating the delusion under which the multitude lay, he neither justified nor failed to denounce the crimes of their rulers, whom he reproved with so much boldness as to stir up their fury to the highest pitch. He then withdrew to the Mount of Olives with his disciples, to whom he conversed further of his own approaching end, and of the utter ruin which should shortly come upon Jerusalem; after which he retired, as his custom was, to spend the night at Bethany.

He supped that evening with one Simon, whom he had formerly cured of a leprosy; and a scene occurred, during the meal, not dissimilar to what had taken place a short time before in the house of Lazarus. A woman, whose name is not mentioned by any of the evangelists, but whom commentators, with great show of reason, pronounce to have been Mary Magdalene, poured over his head a jar of precious ointment, the perfume of which filled the whole house. His disciples were offended at the deed; Judas, especially, again pronounced it to be an act of grievous extravagance; but our Lord rebuked his followers, vindicated the woman, and declared that wherever his gospel was preached, her fame should extend. It needed but some

such check as this to bring the lurking malice of Judas to a head. The slave of envy no less than of avarice, he had long looked up to his Lord with an evil eye, and he rose from supper that he might carry into effect a project which he seems to have more than once meditated.

In the mean while, a meeting of the sanhedrim had been held at the house of the high-priest, where the necessity of arresting Jesus, and putting him immediately to death, was agitated. Apprehensions of a tumult, if so bold a step were taken during the feast, caused, indeed, the proposition to be received with considerable distrust; but Judas no sooner declared himself willing to betray his Master, than the hesitation of the elders vanished, and it was agreed that the life of the Messiah should be bartered away for thirty pieces of silver. That our Lord knew what was passing in the council-chamber no doubt can exist; he had given many proofs already, and he gave others but a short time afterward, that "from him no secrets were hid;" yet he continued to act with the same calmness and deliberation as ever, "going up," as the prophet expresses it, "like a lamb to the slaughter." He passed the evening of the fourth day as has been described above, and early in the morning of the fifth, or great day of the feast, made preparations to celebrate the passover in Jerusalem.

That all things might be done in order, he sent forward two of his disciples to prepare a convenient apartment for him and his company. There was no difficulty in effecting this, because, at that season, the doors of every house in Jerusalem were thrown open for the accommodation of strangers; and an upper chamber being procured in a department of the city adjoining to the tomb of David, Christ, with his twelve followers, immediately took possession of it.

The mode of conducting this great commemorative feast among the Jews so far differed from that originally in use, that instead of eating it with staves in their hands, standing, and in haste, they reclined upon couches arranged for their reception. A greater degree of form, likewise, seems to have been kept up than could be practicable in Egypt; and the whole entertainment was divided, to use the language of modern times, into three courses. First, the head of the family, or the individual who acted as such, having seen that those around him, masters and servants, men and

women, and children, without distinction of rank or age, had washed their feet, distributed to them morsels of the paschal lamb, with unleavened bread and cups of red wine. The party then washed their feet a second time, after which a second course of salad or bitter herbs, seasoned with a sauce of bruised palm-branches, berries, or raisins, mixed with vinegar, was administered; the ruler of the feast dividing the bread into two portions, one of which he laid aside, covered with a napkin, while over the other he pronounced these words, "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the whole world, in the eating of unleavened bread." The third course again consisted simply of the reserved portion of bread, which with peculiar solemnity and a particular form of benediction he divided among his friends, and a cup of wine, called the cup of salvation, which in like manner he blessed and passed around. Such was the passover, which, on all occasions concluded with singing the 113th and the five following psalms; of which, as the reader need scarcely be reminded, the last is peculiarly significant of the coming of Christ.

The first course had been gone through, Jesus acting as master or head of the assembly, when, to the astonishment of his disciples, he arose, and girding himself with a towel, after the manner of servants in early times, he proceeded to wash the feet of those who sat at meat with him. The first submitted without hesitation, overcome, in all probability, by surprise; but Peter, hurt at what he conceived to be the degradation of his Master, would have resisted the effort to wash him. Our Lord, however, no sooner explained to him the mystical meaning of the scene, than Peter gave himself up entirely to the will of his Divine Master, and the Redeemer went on from one to another, till he had performed the same menial office to all. He then taught them, that if he, whom they acknowledged as their superior, could thus far humble himself, it was their duty to strive one against another in offices of mutual kindness; and that humility was especially necessary among men who looked for crowns, not in this world, but in a better.

The ceremony of washing being ended, and all having again resumed their seats, our Lord hastened to inform them that one out of their number would, ere many hours expired, betray him to his enemies. As might be

expected, excessive sorrow and humiliation overcame them all, and they began, one after another, to inquire in anxious tones, "Lord, is it I?" Last of all Judas put this question to his Master, who replied without disguise that he was the man; and the same announcement was made to the rest of the disciples by his giving a sop to the traitor from his own hand. Shame and a consciousness of guilt were more than Judas could bear. He rose from his seat, quitted the assembly, and went to carry into execution the plot which he had already matured.

The traitor was no sooner gone than our Saviour, after performing the routine of the second course, proceeded to institute that solemn sacrament which has ever since been celebrated in remembrance of his death. Breaking the bread, he gave it to each of his followers as his body which was about to be offered for the sins of the whole world; and he accompanied the gift by a similar benediction and donation of the cup, as his blood of the New Testament. Finally, he assured them that he should never again drink of the juice of the grape, till he drank it new with them in the kingdom of heaven; and having commanded them to keep sacred the ceremony for ever, he withdrew, attended by his followers, to the Mount of Olives.

Among other topics discussed on this melancholy occasion, our Lord had assured his followers that the period was not very distant when they would all forsake him. It was only natural that they should be affected with deep sorrow on hearing such an accusation brought against them; but it remained for Peter alone to assert, in a peremptory tone, that let come what might, he would follow his Lord's fortunes to the last. Our Lord looked at him, more with sorrow than with anger, while he replied, that ere the cock crew twice he would thrice deny him. Yet Peter repeated his protestations more vehemently than before, and the example thus set was eagerly followed by the rest. No great while elapsed, however, ere their faith was put to the test, and a deplorable instance of the weakness of human resolution was afforded.

On the Mount of Olives our Lord repeated to them the substance of many of the lessons which he had on other occasions taught. He warned them against spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, conjured them to love one another,

promised that when he was taken from them a Comforter should be sent, and cheered them with the assurance that as the Father was in him so should he ever be with his church. He then solemnly prayed to God for them and for all mankind; with equal solemnity blessed them, and, feeling that his hour was come, removed with them to the garden of Gethsemane.

The spot in question was attached to a village of the same name at the base of the Mount of Olives, and lay in a pleasant valley on the further side of the brook Kedron. The night was far advanced when the holy company entered it; but the moon being full, all things in and round the garden shone with peculiar beauty. The air too was mild and calm; yet there was a strife in progress between the principles of good and evil which soon overcast the serenity of that sky and caused every object in earth and heaven to be shrouded in pitchy darkness. The last effort of Satan to maintain his dominion in this lower world was made here, and so terrible was the struggle that even the Son of God scarcely succeeded in maintaining it. But to describe that extraordinary scene in other words besides those of the inspired penman were, in our judgment, an act little short of impiety. "They came to Gethsemane," says St. Mark, "and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him (apart from the rest) Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him." We are told elsewhere, that during this tremendous interval large drops, not of sweat but of blood, oozed from his pores; and what the agony must have been which led to such a result the human imagination finds it difficult to conceive. But the hour could not pass; the sins of the whole world were laid on him, and it behooved him at every expense of suffering and of sorrow to effect the work of reconciliation. An angel was accordingly despatched to strengthen and support him, and the last and deadliest effort of the enemy of mankind failed in producing the smallest effect.

During the progress of that most mysterious and awful conflict, our Lord had more than once returned to his disci-

ples, whom he found overwhelmed with an unnatural drowsiness, and fast asleep. The third time he roused them, just as the torches and flambeaux of his enemies became visible; for Judas had hastened from the paschal feast to the house of the high-priest, and was now at the head of a guard of soldiers seeking for him, whom he had stipulated to betray. The traitor knew his master's haunts, and hence no difficulty was experienced in discovering him; but the still-faithful eleven, more zealous than prudent, would have opposed force to force, had the Lord permitted. Peter, indeed, without waiting for the sanction of Jesus, drew and stood upon his defence; and striking at Malchus, one of the high-priest's servants, cut off his right ear. But Jesus, far from commending, blamed him for his precipitancy, and immediately healed the wound which his inconsiderate follower had inflicted. Upon this the disciples, imagining that all was lost, fled; and even Peter so far followed the example of the rest, as to look, at least for a time, only to his own safety.

In the mean while Judas, advancing towards Jesus, gave the signal which had been agreed upon, by kissing him. The soldiers then approached to arrest him; but such was the dignity of his presence and the sanctity of his deportment that at first their courage failed them, and they shrank back. It suited not, however, with the divine decree that Jesus should escape the indignities, to suffer which, indeed, constituted the main design of his coming into the world; and the guards, recovering their confidence, rushed upon him and led him away bound. They conducted him first to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who, after a short inquiry into his doctrine and manner of life, gave orders that he should be conveyed to the palace of the high-priest, in order that his trial might take place before the sanhedrim, already assembled for the purpose. Thither, therefore, he was led, and there he underwent a series of insults and contumelies, such as no man can hear recounted without a shudder.

Our Lord being ushered into the hall, false witnesses were suborned to lay to his charge a thousand things of which they knew him to be innocent. They prevaricated and contradicted, not only one another, but themselves; yet such was the hostility of his judges, that the declarations

of these miscreants were listened to with complacency, and our Lord's fate was sealed. In order, however, to give a greater colour of reason to their verdict, the high-priest solemnly adjured Jesus, in the name of the Most High God, to declare whether he were the Christ; and when the latter avowed his right to that title, and spoke of the day when he should come again in the clouds of heaven, his words were pronounced to be blasphemous, and he was adjudged worthy of death. Blows, buffetings, revilings, and the grossest insults were now heaped upon him with savage ferocity, all of which he endured without repining, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb."

While these things were going on in the judgment-hall, John and Peter, recovering from their panic, repaired to the high-priest's house, and the former being acquainted with some of that functionary's domestics, they were admitted into an outer chamber, where they watched the result. There Peter was charged three different times with being one of Christ's disciples, and three different times he denied it. He had scarcely done so, adding an oath to his last denial, when the cock crew for the second time, and Peter saw at the same moment his outraged master gazing upon him with a sorrowful and reproving glance. The disciple's conscience stung him to the quick; he rushed from the house, and in a passion of tears confessed his own weakness and cruel infidelity.

While our Lord passed that night amid the revilings of a brutal soldiery, Judas, desperate from a sense of the enormity of his crime, rushed into the presence of the chief priest, avowed his guilt, and threw down the price of his soul's salvation. But his was not the remorse of one really penitent. Despairing of pardon, as well he might, he added yet one sin more to the mass of his transgressions; and seeing that the rulers only mocked at his late repentance, he committed suicide.

At early dawn on the following morning, the sanhedrim again assembled, and after dedicating the thirty pieces of silver to the purchase of a burial-ground for strangers, they summoned Jesus before them. It has been stated in another part of this work, that after the deposition of Archelaus, Judea was deprived even of the semblance of independence which she had hitherto enjoyed. The administration of criminal

law, for example, was from that time forth but partially intrusted to the native judges, inasmuch as the fiat of the Roman procurator was absolutely indispensable to give a sanction to the execution of the most daring malefactor. The sanhedrim, therefore, as soon as they had put a few more questions to Jesus, led him to the prætorium, or judgment-hall of Pilate, demanding that the procurator would confirm their sentence, and order him for execution. But Pilate, understanding that the culprit was a native of Galilee, sent him, after a short examination, under a guard, to Herod, whom the customs of his religion had brought up at that season to Jerusalem. This act of deference served to reconcile to each other two functionaries who had long been at enmity; and between whom just and ample cause of enmity subsisted.

Herod was greatly rejoiced when he learned that Jesus was near; for he had heard much of his extraordinary actions, and desired greatly to witness a miracle; but our Lord refusing to plead his own cause before a tribunal unauthorized to decide upon it, the tyrant's curiosity was converted into rage. He commanded Jesus to be arrayed in a public robe, in mockery of his royal pretensions, and having subjected him to other insults, sent him back to Pilate.

Great was the tumult which now arose among the insane and giddy multitude, who, instigated by their priests, demanded, with one accord, that Jesus should be put to death. They assigned, indeed, no cause for the demand, such as a Roman governor could admit to be just, and Pilate, in consequence, expressed himself absolutely averse to shed the blood of his prisoner; but the greater the degree of reluctance exhibited by the procurator, the more clamorous the crowd became that one who presumed to call himself the Son of God should die. "Why, what evil hath he done?" asked Pilate; "I find no fault in him; I will scourge him, and let him go;" and though repeatedly urged to pass the last sentence of the law, for a while he steadily refused. At last it was stated to him, that Jesus ought to die because he set himself up as a king; in other words, because he professed himself the rival of Tiberias, and an enemy to the Roman power. Yet this charge failed of proving satisfactory, because its subject, though he avowed himself a prince, denied that his kingdom was of this world; while

Pilate's wife sent to entreat her husband on no account to yield to the clamours of the Jews. Pilate accordingly gave up Jesus to the soldiers, with instructions to scourge and then dismiss him ; and withdrew for a brief space from the prætorium.

The directions just given were immediately carried into force with rancorous barbarity. Not only was the back of the Son of God torn with rods, but the brutal guard, plating a crown of the *naba* tree, a plant bristling with sharp thorns or spikes, thrust it on his head, and putting a sceptre of reed in his hand, they bent the knee in mockery before him. Yet this harsh treatment sufficed not to allay the animosity of the Jews. Once more they beset the procurator with mingled shouts and threats, that if he refused to execute Jesus they would complain of him to the emperor ; and Pilate, conscious that a feather would turn the scale against him with his ferocious master, no longer resisted their wishes. Having in vain requested them to accept Jesus as the prisoner whom it was customary to release at the annual feast, he called for water, and washing his hands in their presence, pronounced himself free from the guilt of Christ's murder. "His blood be upon us, and upon our children,"* cried the infuriated mob ; their shouts and perseverance prevailed, and the long-promised and long-expected Messiah was condemned to suffer death upon the cross.

This terrible and most iniquitous sentence was no sooner passed, than the murderers, with reckless fury, hastened to carry it into effect. It was customary among the Romans to compel a condemned criminal to be the bearer of the instrument by which he was about to suffer ; and Jesus, like the rest, was loaded with the crossbeam or *furca* of his cross ; but the weight being considerable, Simon the Cyrenian, one of his disciples, whom the guard met by the way, was commanded to support the further extremity of the beam. In this order, surrounded by a prodigious multitude, some shouting others weeping and lamenting, the Son of

* Never was malediction more terribly fulfilled ; and it is somewhat remarkable that the very Jews themselves admit the fact. Maimonides, "De Christo," says, "He (Jesus) was the cause that Israel perished ; that the remnant of them were dispersed and oppressed, the law changed and the greater part of the world perverted."

God moved towards the place appointed for his execution ; which, by one of those striking arrangements which run through the whole of sacred history, was the very spot where Isaac, his prototype, had been offered as a burnt-offering. Of the execrations and opprobrious epithets cast upon him, Jesus took no heed ; but hearing the voice of lamentation, he turned round, and addressed himself to the pious women from whom it proceeded : " Daughters of Jerusalem," said he, " weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For lo, the days come in which it shall be said, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck." These were the last words of exhortation or warning which our Lord applied to his countrymen at large, for soon after he had given utterance to them, the procession reached the foot of Calvary.

At this place a stupifying draught, composed of myrrh and wormwood mixed with vinegar, was, according to established usage, offered to him ; but he declined it. The guard then moved to the summit of the hill, where, between two common malefactors, the companions, in all probability of the robber Barabbas, our Saviour Christ, the King of Glory and Might, was crucified.

Our Lord was affixed to the accursed tree about the third hour, that is to say, about nine o'clock in the morning, and his garments, as was the practice in such cases, were parted among the soldiers who guarded him. During three whole hours he lay in agony, praying for his murderers, and exposed to the blasphemies and insults of a people drunk with the cup of infatuation. Even of his partners in suffering, one at least joined in loading him with insults ; but the other, struck with the difference between their plight and that of Jesus, reproved him for his folly, and besought the Lord that he would remember him when he came into his kingdom. The power of reading the heart which had ever belonged to him as God, was not withdrawn from Jesus in his dying moments ; and, knowing that the thief's conversion was sincere, he promised that they should meet again in Paradise.

It was now noon, and the relative positions of the heavenly bodies were such that no eclipse of the sun could by any natural means take place. Our Lord, feeling that his

work was accomplished, requested of those who stood near to give him drink ; and after solemnly commending his mother, who with tearless eyes, but a breaking heart, stood at the foot of the cross, to the care of his favourite John, he cried out in an agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But God had not forsaken him. One prayer more, a prayer that the Father would receive his spirit, was uttered ; and then, bending the head, he gave up the ghost.

The effect produced upon every portion of inanimate nature by the completion of this tremendous tragedy was awful beyond the power of language to describe. The sun, as if ashamed to behold so bloody a deed, hid his face in utter darkness ; and the day was changed into night from the sixth to the ninth hour. The rocks were split by a furious earthquake, the veil of the temple which divided the holy from the holiest apartment was rent in twain from top to bottom, graves opened of their own accord and gave up their inmates, who, to demonstrate that life and immortality were purchased, showed themselves to many. Nay, the sentiments of not a few among those who had previously been the bitterest of his enemies underwent a change scarcely less miraculous ; and they retired from the spot fully satisfied that Jesus was indeed the Christ. But the malevolence of the chief priests continued as violent as before. They had objected to the inscription which Pilate placed over the head of Jesus, and vainly sought to have it erased, indignant that even in death he should be designated "The King of the Jews;" and they now determined to carry their resentment to his very grave, in the fervent expectation that with him would perish the memory of his sect.

The criminals suffered on Friday, that is, on the day preceding the Sabbath ; and as it was contrary to the law of Moses that their bodies should continue exposed throughout that season of rest, the priests easily persuaded Pilate to permit the legs of Christ and his fellow-sufferers to be broken, and themselves removed. The legs of the two thieves were accordingly crushed ; but when the soldiers came to Jesus and found him already dead, they broke not so much as one of his bones : they merely pierced his side with a spear, that no doubt of his fate might remain. Thus was one prophecy relative to the great sacrifice verified to

the letter, as another had been when the soldiers "parted his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture."

In the mean while Joseph of Arimathea, a devout man, had solicited and obtained permission from Pilate to bury Jesus in a tomb which he had cut out for himself from a rock, in a garden of which he was the proprietor. He was assisted in executing this pious office by Nicodemus, as well as by several of the women who followed our Lord's steps; and a large stone being rolled over the aperture, the party withdrew with a design of completing the embalment after the Sabbath should have passed. But the priests, remembering the promise which Jesus had given that on the third day he would rise from the dead, and fearful lest his body might be stolen, and a persuasion produced that he had fulfilled that promise, were not content to leave the matter thus: they sealed the rock which covered his grave with the public seal of the sanhedrim; and obtaining a guard of Roman soldiers, they commanded them to keep strict watch over the spot till the third day should have expired. All this occurred on the Sabbath, and for some hours excitement ceased to be felt.

In the mean while the women had not been inattentive to the charge of providing spices. These were procured and properly mixed, so as to be turned to account at early dawn on the first day of the week; and at the appointed hour the pious females hastened from their several lodgings, by different routes, towards the Lord's sepulchre. That they went thither in absolute forgetfulness of their Master's promised resurrection, the whole of the circumstances attending their visit demonstrates; for their astonishment was extreme when they found the cave empty, and a being of celestial countenance and in glorious apparel sitting at its mouth. That being was an angel. He had descended but a few minutes before in sight of the horror-smitten guard, rolled back the stone from the grave of the Messiah, and roused its inmate from slumber; and he now commanded the women to go and tell his disciples that the Lord was risen as he had said. They ran back in amazement, communicated what had befallen, but met with no credence from the eleven; for the whole affair so far transcended the powers of imagination to conceive, that the disciples were unable to persuade themselves of its reality.

Nevertheless, Peter and John, instigated by curiosity, ran to the sepulchre, which they found indeed empty, as had been described; but beholding no vision of angels they retired, if not disbelieving, at all events distrustful of the event.

The two disciples were returned from the spot full of amazement, when another party of women arrived, among whom was numbered Mary Magdalene. They likewise saw enough to satisfy them that some great event had befallen; but it was to Mary, and to her alone, that Jesus on this occasion showed himself. She lingered behind her companions in tears, when a man whom she mistook for the principal gardener suddenly stood beside her, and after a brief interval laid before her ample proof that he was indeed her Lord. But even the declaration of Mary that she had seen Jesus was received with distrust; nor was it till the evening of that day that a general belief in their Master's resurrection was forced upon his followers.

It chanced that about noon two of their number were proceeding towards the village of Emmaus, in deep conversation as to the strange rumours afloat, when they were suddenly joined by a stranger, who inquired into the nature of their discourse. They told him without scruple, and he immediately demonstrated to them that these very occurrences had been foretold by every prophet from Moses downwards. The disciples were, as might be expected, astonished at the erudition of their new acquaintance, and they urged him so warmly to abide with them that night that he consented. By-and-by refreshments were introduced; when the stranger, breaking the bread, solemnly blessed it after a fashion not to be mistaken. Their eyes were opened, they recognised their Lord; but ere they could offer to him so much as the poor sacrifice of their worship, he had vanished out of their sight.

The two disciples, without pausing to rest, hurried back to their companions, whom they found assembled in a large upper chamber, with bolted doors, for fear of the Jews. They learned here that Peter, as well as they, had been favoured with a sight of his Master; and they were explaining what they had this day seen and heard, when suddenly, to the astonishment of all present, the Lord himself stood among them. He blessed them with peculiar fervour,

showed them the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and still further to allay their apprehensions, ate and drank in their presence; and he summed up all by recalling to their recollection, that events had fallen out in exact accordance with his repeated promises. Those who witnessed the scene could no longer doubt; but there was one, by name Thomas, who beheld it not, and all the protestations of his fellow-disciples failed to convince him: "Unless I put my fingers into the prints of the nails," said he, "and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Our Lord disappeared as soon as he saw that his followers were convinced that no delusion mocked them, and for eight full days he came not near them again. At the end of that period, however, when they were met together as before, Thomas the distrustful being present, he came, as he had formerly done, unexpectedly among them. Even Thomas's disbelief was now effaced. He fell at Jesus's feet, and acknowledged him to be his Lord and his God.

The next occasion on which our Saviour was seen occurred on the twenty-second day after his resurrection. The eleven, by his advice, had retired into Galilee, and were assembled with five hundred disciples on a certain mountain where he had appointed to meet them, when their Master stood before them, an object of amazement to all, and of immediate rapture and worship to the large majority. Some, indeed, distrusted the evidence of their own senses, fearing that his bodily presence could be no other than a delusion; but the doubts of these amounted not to infidelity, and they were speedily removed by what followed. For our Lord again made himself visible seven days after, at the lake of Tiberias, where he both ate and drank with those who beheld him; and at the end of another week again appeared to the eleven at Jerusalem. This was perhaps the most striking of all his appearances. It was now that he gave them the great command to "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" while he promised that in this, their pious labour he would be with the pastors of his flock till the consummation of all things.

Our Lord had by this time completed the great purpose for which he condescended to revisit the earth, for an adequate number of faithful witnesses were satisfied that he

had really risen; and the power of making proselytes, which he alone had hitherto exercised, was delegated to his chosen followers. It seemed now that some irrefragable proof should be presented that he was capable of performing all his other promises; more especially that the Comforter, whose coming he had stated to depend upon himself, would not be withheld. No arrangement seemed so likely to produce this result as a visible ascent into heaven, and our Lord and Saviour, aware of the fact, determined not to withhold the spectacle from the eyes of his faithful followers. On the fourth day, therefore, after his last-mentioned interview with his disciples, Jesus again appeared to them, and led them about half a mile from the city, to one of the ridges of Mount Olivet. Here he charged them to remain at Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost should be sent, gave them his last and most solemn benediction, and as the words fell from his lips, rose from the earth. "And it came to pass," says St. Luke, "while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." From whence he shall not return, till he come in the power of the Majesty on High to judge the world.

We are well aware that to the important and deeply-interesting passages of Scripture from which the preceding details are taken objections more weighty have been urged than to almost any other portion of the sacred volume. It has been asserted, for example, that the matters recorded of our Saviour during the latter part of his sojourn on earth abound with contradictions and inconsistencies, and that the facts of his resurrection and ascension are not established upon evidence sufficiently conclusive to satisfy the unprejudiced inquirer. Whence came it, that he who had so repeatedly resisted the efforts of his countrymen to invest him with royal honours should in the end make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem? How came the pattern of all excellence to vent his spleen upon an inanimate tree, at a season too when fruit was not to be expected? From what cause did Christ's agony in the garden spring? Why was Peter the apostate so freely forgiven, yet Judas the traitor left to perish in his despair? How is it possible to account for the phenomena which are stated to have marked the moment of Christ's passion; and whence did it arise that the resurrection and ascension were not both of them

as public as the crucifixion? But above all, granting that these difficulties may be overcome, is it consistent with reason to speak of him as God who himself declared that there were events in contingency of which he knew nothing. It were absurd to deny that such questions as these will force themselves upon the notice even of the most sober-minded, and it therefore remains to ascertain how far they are or are not capable of a concise but satisfactory solution.

The contradiction which is supposed to appear in our Saviour's proceedings touching the admission of his right to the title of the Messiah cannot, we apprehend, produce uneasiness in the breast of any one who entertains tolerably correct notions relative to the great end of his public ministry upon earth. That ministry extended over something less than three years, a space of time surely not too great to effect the eradication of long-established prejudices from the minds of his disciples, and to prepare them for their future tasks. Now had our Lord, aware as he was of the groundless hopes of the Jewish people, permitted his claims to be blazoned abroad at an early period, he would have brought on the great catastrophe ere his followers were ripe for it, and defeated the very end to attain which they had been separated from the rest of mankind. But he did not act thus; on the contrary, though he never refused the homage of such individuals as professed to view in him the Seed so ardently expected, he steadily declined the plaudits of the mob, till the fitting hour had arrived; and he then received these plaudits for the double purpose of satisfying his own disciples of the justice of his claim, and of leading to the issue which actually came to pass. His behaviour, therefore, so far from involving a contradiction, was perfectly consistent throughout, being strictly analogous to that of all persons who, with some mighty design before them, bring the means of accomplishing it gradually and judiciously into play.

With respect again to the cursing of the barren fig-tree enough has, we presume, been said while narrating the fact itself to set the whole transaction in its true light. No rational person ever felt seriously angry with a piece of senseless matter—it is the child or the idiot alone who dreams of chastising it; and our Lord's general conduct was surely such as to screen him from the disgrace of being

ranked as an idiot or a child. He caused the fig-tree to wither for the purpose of setting strikingly before the eyes of his disciples the hazard of leading sinful or even useless lives, while he instructed them, by that symbol, in the destiny which hung over Judea, and which before many years expired actually befell it. Neither is there the smallest force in the objection which turns upon the avowal of the evangelist, that "the time of figs was not yet." This was doubtless true of the principal or summer crop; but the tree belonged to a class which bears three distinct crops, one of which is eaten as a delicious morsel in early spring. The tree in question, however, producing no fruit at this season, would produce none at any other, and it perished as a fitting emblem of a people utterly barren of good works.

There is, perhaps, no transaction recorded of the Saviour of mankind more mysterious and inexplicable than the account of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Numerous, indeed, are the explications which have been offered of that extraordinary scene, but among them all there is not one which fails to leave upon the mind a strong impression of the inutility of seeking to make clear what God has veiled in darkness. It may be that at that dread hour the Deity lay, as it were, dormant, leaving the man Jesus to struggle alone and unassisted against natural terror and supernatural temptations. It may be that the sense of his country's ingratitude pressed heavily upon his soul, or that the recollection of the many sins whose burden he had undertaken to bear came over him with a force overwhelming and resistless. That it was not the mere apprehension of death, painful as that must have been, which forced blood instead of sweat through his pores, his mode of acting before his judges and at the place of execution abundantly proves; but what it was we own ourselves totally unable to determine. Of the fact itself, however, no more doubt can exist than of any other circumstance recorded in the New Testament, seeing that they all equally depend upon the credibility of those from whose testimony we derive our knowledge of them; and hence, while we bend the head in submission to the dispensations of that Providence which enables us as yet to "see only through a glass darkly," we are not the less called upon to adore the goodness

of God, who has established the general truth of Christianity upon a foundation against which hell itself shall never be able to prevail.

The same language which we have used with reference to the agony, we are again compelled to employ in treating of our Lord's exclamation on the cross ; it is one of those hidden things which belong to God, not to us nor to our children. But of every other event accompanying that tremendous scene we are happily enabled to speak in terms more explicit. Of the forgiveness of the thief upon the cross, for example, it is sufficient to observe, that the repentant criminal stood in a situation absolutely unattainable by any other man besides. The probability is, that he had either never heard of Jesus before, or that like his countrymen at large he expected him, if he was really the Messiah, to assume the guise of a successful warrior ; and in either case his worship of Jesus, when suspended like himself upon the cross, was an act of faith altogether without parallel. Besides, the attribute of reading the heart belonged to Christ, though it never has belonged and never will belong to another in the human form ; and hence he was fully entitled to make a positive promise, where it would be presumption in mere man to go beyond hope. No argument, therefore, in favour of the efficacy of a deathbed repentance is to be drawn from this transaction, though it unquestionably speaks volumes in testimony of God's long-suffering and mercy ; while he who uses it in exculpation of the ravings of fanaticism grievously deceives himself or wilfully deceives others.

But the preternatural darkness which indicated that "all was finished," the earthquake, the resurrection of the dead, and the rending of the veil of the temple : how are these things to be accounted for ? That no natural eclipse of the sun could take place the relative positions of the heavenly bodies demonstrate, for the moon was at the full ; how then was the effect produced ? We answer, that as the whole transaction lay beyond nature, it is useless to ask from what cause it proceeded ; but that it actually did take place we have other evidence besides that of the evangelists for asserting. "It was observed at Heliopolis, in Egypt," says Dr. Hales, "by Dionysius the Areopagite, afterward the illustrious convert of Paul at Athens, who, in a letter

to the martyr Polycarp, describes his own and his companion the sophist Apollophanes's astonishment at the phenomenon, when they saw the darkness commence at the eastern limb of the sun, and proceed to the western, till the whole was eclipsed; and then retrograde backwards from the western to the eastern, till his light was fully restored; which they attributed to the miraculous passage of the moon across the sun's disk.* Apollophanes exclaimed, as if divining the cause, 'These, O good Dionysius, are the vicissitudes of Divine events!' Dionysius answered, 'Either the Deity suffers, or he sympathizes with the sufferer.' And that sufferer, according to a tradition preserved by Michael Syncellus of Jerusalem, he declared to be 'The unknowable God, for whose sufferings all nature was darkened and convulsed.'

This is strong corroborative testimony, were such wanted, as happily it is not. The darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the splitting of the rocks, nay, the very restoration to life of persons long dead, are all equally recorded by men whose miracles sufficiently confirm the truth of their assertions; and they are equally to be received as facts or rejected at the expense of a rejection of the whole volume in which they hold a place. This, however, we have already shown to involve absurdities infinitely more palpable than an opposite mode of proceeding; and hence on the authority of the sacred writers we are bound to believe that such signs did accompany the passion of our blessed Redeemer.

But why, it has been demanded, were the resurrection and ascension veiled in a species of mystery; why did our Lord, if he really desired to convert his countrymen, abstain from showing himself openly in the temple? for had this been done it seems impossible to conceive that incredulity itself could have held out longer. Our reply is short, but it is abundantly satisfactory; such was not the will of God, because to act thus would have been wholly at variance with God's general scheme of moral government. It would, moreover, have produced no good effect, as a brief consideration of other circumstances may prove.

* There seems to be no necessity for adopting an hypothesis so very unphilosophical as this. The moon could not thus be carried out of her course without deranging the whole of nature; but a mere withdrawal of the luminous clouds which surround the opaque body of the sun would equally cause darkness over the whole world.

Our Lord summoned Lazarus from the grave openly and in the sight of all men ; yet the spectacle, so far from converting the Pharisees and chief priests, served only to harden them in their infidelity. Instead of admitting the claims of the Being who had recalled a dead man to life, they sought to kill not only the worker but the subject of the miracle. What ground have we for supposing that they would have acted differently towards Christ, had he after his resurrection shown himself in the temple, and when he passed, as he doubtless would, like the air from their hands, is it probable that they would have failed to account for the circumstance by referring it to magic ? Besides, were these men entitled to so great a display of God's power and mercy ? had their previous conduct been such as to merit it ?

Again, no truth can be more certain than that, as far as we are concerned, the facts of Christ's resurrection and ascension rest upon authority quite as conclusive as if the whole inhabitants of Jerusalem had been eyewitnesses to both. Of that mighty mass of men there could be, comparatively speaking, few by whom our Lord's person and manner were so intimately known, as that their assertions would have added aught to the assertions of his eleven disciples ; why then employ a multitude of incompetent, rather than a small though adequate number of competent witnesses ? But it was not by the eleven alone that Christ was seen after his resurrection. Five hundred persons on one occasion, and upwards of one hundred on another, were equally with the eleven favoured with proofs of his presence : surely the evidence of five hundred credible persons is quite as conclusive of any given truth as that of five thousand ; and though it be true that the apostles themselves never appeal to these five hundred, this tends only to prove that the testimony of the whole of Judea could not have given additional effect to the testimony of the twelve. " To establish the credit of a witness," says Bishop Horsley, " it is not sufficient that he be really competent to judge for himself of the reality of the fact which he takes it upon him to attest, but his competency in the matter must be generally known and understood. Now this was the case with the apostles : " but with none besides ; for though others might have had a sufficient knowledge of Christ's person to identify it after his resur-

rection themselves, they could not possibly satisfy all Jerusalem that the case was so.

It appears, then, that the evidence which we actually possess of our Lord's resurrection in the testimony of the eleven witnesses is the most satisfactory which could be given; because their bearing false witness in a case of this kind, and all agreeing in that witness, would have been as great a deviation from the known laws of nature, as any miracle that ever was performed. It is true that one of the evangelists informs us of a rumour current among the Jews that the disciples of Jesus stole his body while the guard slept: but the candour which could induce him to state this may of itself satisfy every unprejudiced person that St. Matthew was quite incapable of asserting as true what he knew to be false. No man seeking to impose fiction for truth upon others would place such a fact upon record.

But granting these points of faith to be fully established, how are the respective fates of Peter and Judas to be accounted for; and whence can Jesus be spoken of as God, seeing that he confesses himself ignorant of the day and the hour of his own return to judge the world.

To the first of these questions we reply, that though both Peter and Judas sinned grievously, the crime of the one was by many degrees less heinous than that of the other. Peter fell under the influence of a sudden temptation. He was perfectly sincere when he expressed himself ready to die with his Lord, and he denied him only because personal fear proved too strong for him; Judas, on the other hand, was a hypocrite from the beginning, and deliberately sold his master to certain death. There is this difference, likewise, in the cases of the two men, that the one was instantly humbled and sought pardon with tears, while the tears of the other were those of despair, not of penitence. How far even Judas might have been forgiven had he sought forgiveness as became him we are not justified in determining; but it is no proof of repentance or a change of heart from bad to good to stifle the voice of conscience by the commission of suicide. It is worthy of remark, moreover, that our Lord embraced every future opportunity to show that Peter's apostacy was blotted out of the book of his remembrance;*

* This is the true explication of our Lord's seeming preference to Peter over his fellow-apostles for that given by the church of Rome is wholly illusory.

by appearing to that apostle first of all his brethren, and by committing to him in an especial manner the charge to "feed his lambs." That our Lord's object in all this was to mark beforehand how displeasing to him were the severities of a later age no thinking person can doubt.

We come now to the last point in dispute, into which we feel that we cannot enter as it deserves without extending our present work far beyond the limits designed for it. We must content ourselves, therefore, by stating that our Saviour's memorable declaration touching the coming of the Day of Judgment furnishes no ground whatever on which to deny his divinity. Every reader of the Bible must be aware that "not to know" and not "to speak of a thing" are terms strictly synonymous when used by an inspired person; as St. Paul, for example, declares in one of his epistles that he is determined "to know nothing" among his converts "except Christ, and him crucified." Our Lord, therefore, when he made use of the expression, "but of that day and of that hour knoweth no man; no, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father," meant simply that even the Son would not reveal it so as that its approach might be accurately calculated. But the signs which he immediately afterward mentions as destined to precede the great and terrible day of the Lord sufficiently attest that he was silent from no absence of power to speak out; while his whole conversation bears upon it a stamp of divinity, such as it seems impossible not to feel as well as to notice. In like manner, though our Lord frequently alludes to himself as inferior in some respects to the Father, the expression is to be interpreted as referring to the kind of connexion between them, in which respect the church has ever allowed that the "Father is greater than the Son;" but the relative superiority and inferiority here involves no point of moral or intellectual difference; it is one of pater-nity and filiation alone. This is indeed rendered incontrovertible by the fact that the same Being who on one occasion avows "the Father is greater than I," affirms on another "I and the Father are one."

Besides these palpable facts, it is not to be forgotten that Jesus of Nazareth united in his own person two natures; one perfectly divine, the other perfectly human. In the latter he was necessarily very inferior to the Father; and

it may be, that it is of his human nature alone that he speaks as of something both short-sighted and feeble ; and if the case really was so, then is there no difficulty to be overcome. All sects of Christians unite in the admission that Christ's humanity was subject to the like infirmities and weaknesses with our own. But we cannot pretend to condense within the space of a few pages the substance of a controversy so extensive as is involved in the question now under review. The pious and the sincere must consult the sacred oracles for themselves, where, unless we grossly deceive ourselves, they will find more than sufficient to convince them that by the apostles and first Christians our Lord's divinity was never once denied.

Having thus described the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, it appears necessary, before going on with what remains of sacred history, to say a few words touching the designs of God in sending his only-begotten Son into the world as well as of the Son himself while tabernacling in the flesh.

Our time has been sadly mispent if we have failed to satisfy the reader that the great object of Christ's coming was to atone for the transgression of the first man, and to restore to his posterity the immortality which by that transgression had been forfeited. To render the atonement fully valuable, however, it was necessary that men should again be made acquainted with the just relation in which they stand towards their common Maker ; and to effect this was as much the object of the Redeemer's holy and pious life, as to rob the grave of its power was the design of his painful and ignominious death. Jesus of Nazareth was, therefore, in himself a character absolutely perfect, and the design of the religion which he has bequeathed to the world is to bring mankind as near to perfection as the frailty of human nature will allow. With this view he impressed upon the minds of his followers, both by example and precept, that all men are brethren ; that all are equally bound to worship and obey God ; that all are equally bound to love one another ; and that he who wilfully injures or neglects to assist his fellow-men in need is amenable to the wrath of the Creator and Governor of the universe. The standard of Christian morality is, moreover, of the most exalted kind. It extends not merely to men's actions, but

to their secret thoughts ; since the very desire to perpetrate evil, even though it be not indulged, is condemned as positively sinful.

But the religion of Christ, though strictly and beautifully moral, comprehends more than a code of rules for the guidance of men's conduct. It instructs them in the doctrines of a future state, attainable through no merit of their own, but through the blood of the atonement alone : it reveals the fact that the day is coming when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed ; when the graves shall be opened, and the sea give up his dead, that all may appear before the judgment of Christ ; and it arbitrarily announces what the imagination had never before conceived, that in the eternal destiny of the soul the body shall participate.

The religion of Christ, moreover, imparts just as much light on the important subject of the Divine nature as the mind of man, a finite and weak creature, seems capable of bearing. We are told explicitly that there is a God, and but one God ; that he is himself invisible, yet every where present ; that he is without parts, passions, prejudices, or infirmities ; infinite in wisdom, in knowledge, and in goodness. We learn, also, by implication rather than by positive revelation, that in the Godhead there is a certain inexplicable arrangement which, in the poverty of human language, we describe as three persons ; and we worship these both severally and conjointly, as the holy and indivisible Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. To the Father we look as the creator and supporter of all things ; to the Son, as the mediator between God and man, through whom, not the primeval transgression alone, but the actual transgressions of men are, on sincere repentance, forgiven ; and to the Holy Ghost we turn our eyes as the author of every pious wish, the dispenser of that grace through which alone we walk upright. Such are the distinguishing tenets, if we may so express ourselves, of the Christian religion ; under which others and scarcely less important principles are included.

It has been shown how, in the infancy of the world, God elected or chose to himself a particular nation, to be the repositories of the true faith, and the gradual dispensers of light to other tribes. To that nation a law and a municipal government were given, God himself condescending to

take rank at the head of the latter, which was administered under him throughout many generations by judges, kings, priests, counsellors, and prophets. In process of time, the purpose for which this election had been made was attained. The world was made ready for the reception of the promised Messiah; he came, and the election ceased; or, to speak more accurately, it was extended so as to embrace, not one family, but all the families of men. The church of Christ, that community in which the religion of the Redeemer was professed, became now the kingdom of God upon earth, and it remained for its Divine founder to arrange both the law and municipal government under which he designed it to subsist.

While our Lord continued in the flesh—in other words, while his death was still in futurity, he himself appeared visibly as the chief administrator of the little community of believers; he was the bishop or pastor of his own church; the immediate ruler of his own kingdom. Even then, however, we learn, that he chose as assistants to himself, two distinct classes of persons, as contradistinguished from the body of the believers; the twelve who in after-years received the designation of Apostles, and the seventy disciples whom on one memorable occasion, at least, he employed to preach the gospel. There seems little reason to doubt that this constitution was formed after the model of the Jewish hierarchy, which exhibited its high-priest, its priests, and its Levites; indeed, the facility with which it was afterward maintained by the converts from the religion of Moses proves that to them its arrangements were perfectly familiar.* But the hour of the Redeemer's departure came. He died, as has been described, rose again, and made preparations to return into the bosom of that glory from which, for the most benevolent of purposes, he had for a season withdrawn himself. Now then it became necessary, in order to preserve the order and principles of the church, that this great Bishop and Pastor of our souls should transfer to others the authority which he had hitherto exercised in his own person; and this he solemnly did at

* The resemblance between Christ's conduct in this respect and that of Moses in the wilderness, must likewise be seen by every reader of the Bible. Moses had there, as his assistants in the government of Israel, the twelve heads of tribes and seventy elders.

one of the last interviews with which he saw meet to honour his disciples. To the eleven, and to them alone, he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and discipline all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."

By virtue of this commission the eleven apostles became from thenceforth the bishops or chief pastors of Christ's kingdom upon earth. They were authorized in every respect to act as their divine Master had done before them; in other words, to administer the two sacraments, to instruct the world in the doctrines of Christianity, and to ordain as well successors to themselves as ministers of other and inferior orders. In a word, the hierarchy was continued, in an extended form under them, which had previously been established by their and our Master. That to them, in an especial manner, belonged the authority to ordain and consecrate others to the ministry, both their own writings and the testimony of the primitive church attest; and hence, till the era of the Reformation, a church destitute of a bishop nowhere existed throughout Christendom.

But our Lord, not satisfied with nominating his own successors, and empowering them to admit into their community such as to them should appear qualified, instituted two important rites, to participate in which might serve as the outward badge of an inward profession of the Christian faith. These were Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the authority to administer which was intrusted exclusively to the ministers of the church; though the benefits arising from them equally extend to all who duly and in sincerity receive them. Of baptism it is scarcely necessary to say, that it holds in the Christian church a place strictly analogous to circumcision in the church of the temple. It is the sign of that eternal covenant into which Almighty God has entered with his creatures; and because by it, and by it alone, the convert is admitted into his new society, it is in the New Testament invariably spoken of as regeneration or the second birth. This, too, it will be observed, is in strict agreement with the practice of the Jewish church,

the converts admitted into which by baptism and circumcision were said to be regenerated or born again ; indeed, so complete was the transfer of the convert from one state of existence to another, that the very ties of kindred, of parent and child, of husband and wife, of brother and sister, were, in the event of his relatives continuing in idolatry, absolutely dissolved. Such was precisely the effect of baptism in the church of Christ, only that here the regeneration referred to things spiritual alone, whereas under the law it extended also to things temporal. Again, the baptized person was said to be justified, because he was received into a state of reconciliation with his Maker ; and he was of the number of the elect, because he thus became a member of the chosen or elected kingdom of God upon earth. It is not, we trust, necessary to add, that from this state of grace all were and are liable to fall. Even in the earliest and best days of Christianity such lapses were but too frequent, as St. Paul's exhortation to his converts, "to make their calling and election sure," too abundantly proves ; but no truth seems to be more fully established than this, that the reception of baptism is a necessary act in the Christian life. When duly administered, that is to say, by persons having competent authority, and in the case of adults received with faith, it unquestionably sets the seal to God's gracious promises ; it gives an assurance that we are no longer in a state of nature, but in a state of grace : it is the commencement of our Christian or spiritual life, and if the terms of the engagement then contracted be on our part adhered to, the benefits arising out of it will be inestimable. The behaviour of Peter towards Cornelius, of Philip to the eunuch, and of Paul to his jailer's family, demonstrate that it was so regarded by the apostles and first teachers of Christianity ; and that it continues to be so regarded by the church of England her formularies and liturgy attest.

As baptism took the place in the Christian community of the Jewish rite of circumcision, so the Lord's Supper superseded, or, to speak more accurately, completed the great Jewish festival of the passover. It is to us, not merely a ceremony commemorative of the great sacrifice on the cross, but it is the feast in the sacrifice itself, by partaking in which we exhibit our desire to be partakers in the benefits

arising out of that stupendous oblation. Our readers need scarcely be reminded, that to feast upon portions of the victims offered to their gods formed a part of the religion of every nation, heathen as well as Jewish; and the terms in which our Lord has left his command, that we should "eat and drink in remembrance of him," completely prove that he designed our proceedings to be regulated by a similar rule. It is true, that no Protestant can allow that any real change takes place in the substance of the bread and wine, nor was such an opinion held any where throughout the Christian world till late in the fifth century; but the analogy between the one ceremony and the other is abundantly manifest, and that our Lord designed it to be seen and felt, his own solemn language to his apostles leaves no room to doubt.

Such is the meager outline which our limits will alone permit us to give of the doctrines, morals, principles, and constitution of the church of Christ, considered as a community set apart from the rest of the world, in which the true faith is preserved, and from which it will, we are assured, ultimately extend over the entire compass of the globe. May that blessed consummation speedily be brought about!

CHAPTER XIII.

Proceedings of the Apostles after the Ascension—Descent of the Holy Ghost—Peter's Discourse—Its Consequences—Exertions of the Disciples to propagate the Faith—Their Miracles; their Sufferings and Travels—Conversion of Saul; his Zeal—Objections stated and answered.

A. D. 31.

THE ascension of their Master, as may well be supposed, affected the disciples with inexpressible awe. Falling upon their knees, they watched his progress with an intensity of interest never before experienced; when suddenly two men in white apparel stood beside them, and demanded why they gazed thus earnestly unto heaven. "This same Jesus

whom ye have seen thus depart," continued they, "shall so come again at the day of judgment, and it remains for you, according to his directions, to prepare the world for that great event." The angels, for such they were, then advised the disciples to return into Jerusalem, there to wait patiently till the promised Comforter should be sent; and they withdrew, ignorant indeed of the just import of the implied assurance, but prepared to obey in all things the will of their glorified Master.

No event of importance befell for some days, except that, at Peter's suggestion, an election was made from among the personal followers of our Lord, to fill the place in the apostolical college made vacant by the apostacy of Judas. Two candidates were put in nomination, Joseph called Barnabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias; and the lots being cast with solemn prayer to God, upon Matthias the choice fell. He was in every respect a fit person to hold the office to which Divine Providence had called him, having been a companion of his Lord from the commencement of John's ministry; and hence, as soon as his brethren had laid their hands upon him, "he was numbered," to use the evangelist's words, "with the eleven apostles."

Our Lord ascended into heaven on the fortieth day after his resurrection, and for the space of ten days all things, with the exception of the occurrence just mentioned, continued as they had been before. On the day of Pentecost, however, that is to say, on the fiftieth after the sixteenth of the month Nizan, when the disciples were assembled together with doors locked for fear of interruption from the Jews, a sound was heard as of a rushing mighty wind, which shook the chamber where they sat, and there came, as it were, cloven tongues of fire, which lighted upon the heads of each of them. Immediately they felt by manifestations not to be misunderstood that the promised Comforter was given. They ran out into the streets, proclaimed aloud that Jesus was the Christ, and delivered their message under circumstances so striking that the attention of the whole world may be said, in some measure, to have been turned to them and their proceedings.

At the seasons of the great festivals of the passover and of pentecost, Jerusalem was crowded, not only with the inhabitants of Palestine Proper, but with all who professed the

religion of Moses, no matter in what district resident. Now it is a well attested fact, that at this particular period there was scarce a nation blessed with the rudiments of civilization in which some at least of the adherents of Judaism were not to be found. The repeated captivities of the tribes; the wandering dispositions of the people, and the curiosity which had within the last two or three centuries been excited as to the contents of the Jewish Scriptures, had all contributed to spread a knowledge of the Mosaic religion over the earth, and numerous were the converts which the Levitical church had made, as well among the Greeks as among the tribes called barbarian. Of these vast numbers came up with the dispersed of the ten tribes to attend the great assemblies at Jerusalem; and it would appear that at least the ordinary proportion from among all classes were met together on the present occasion.

One of the most striking as well as immediate effects of that palpable descent of the Holy Ghost was, to inspire the disciples with a knowledge of numerous languages, of which they had heretofore been totally ignorant. Their preaching, therefore, was not delivered in the Syriac or vernacular tongue of their own country; but, each employing the language which he perceived to be best adapted to the understandings of those by whom he was immediately surrounded, they addressed themselves as if by common consent to all the tribes and families then assembled. It could not fail that the inhabitants of Jerusalem itself should be confounded by a spectacle so unexpected. They knew the apostles to be illiterate mechanics; how then was it conceivable that they should have all at once made themselves masters of so many foreign languages? The fact was absolutely overpowering; and though some through ignorance or malice exclaimed that the enthusiasts were intoxicated, no fewer than three thousand souls, convinced by so striking a miracle, embraced the religion thus offered to them.

Great indeed was the joy of the apostles when they found so many brought at once to profess the true faith, and equally remarkable was the effect produced upon the feelings, dispositions, habits, and conduct of the believers, but the issue of the first attempt, instead of satisfying or allaying the zeal of the apostles, only served to stimulate

them to new exertions. They had wrought their first work of conversion so early as nine o'clock in the morning, and at noon Peter and John went up together to pray in the temple, where they performed the first miracle of healing which stands explicitly recorded of any of our Lord's immediate followers. As they passed the Beautiful Gate, so called because it was formed of Corinthian brass, and exquisitely carved, they saw a lame man watching them with an expression indicative of something more than the mercenary gaze of a common beggar. The apostles stopped short, and Peter, looking him full in the face, said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The effect was electric; the man's limbs recovered their strength and he followed the apostles into the temple, "leaping and walking and praising God." As might have been expected, the spectacle produced a powerful sensation among the assembled crowd, by the most of whom this cripple's previous infirmity was well known; and Peter gladly availed himself of their amazement to address to them a powerful appeal in favour of Christianity. But his discourse was yet unfinished, when the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, all of whom were equally interested in opposing the progress of the faith, rushed in and interrupted him. They were violently excited already by the effect of the morning's lecture, and they were doubly alarmed as soon as intelligence reached them of the act of power just performed; they therefore seized Peter and John and dragged them to prison, though not before full five thousand converts more had been added to the number of believers.

At an early hour on the following morning the sanhedrim assembled, and Peter and John were brought to trial. Beside the accused stood the man recovered from his lameness, an evidence in their favour not to be controverted; and accordingly, when the apostles, entering upon their defence, cited the command of God for their proceeding, however unpalatable their line of argument might be, there were no means of rebutting it. The miracle was palpable; it had been witnessed and was attested by all the inhabitants of the city, and to deny its reality could serve no good purpose. The sanhedrim, therefore, after gravely consulting

together, came to the determination of dismissing the apostles with a peremptory injunction never again to teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John boldly answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, judge ye." With these words they withdrew, not to abandon the course marked out to them, but to pursue it with increased zeal every day; and their success was proportionate to the importance of the cause which they advocated, and to the supernatural powers which were freely vouchsafed to them.

The feeling of universal benevolence was in these early days so strong in the church, that the believers had, in a certain sense of the term, all things in common. The rich sold their lands and houses, that they might distribute to the poor, and many, devoting themselves to the service of the ministry, gave up all their worldly substance to be applied to the necessities of others. No human society, however, is, or ever can be, so as that some hypocrites shall not introduce themselves into it; and even the infant church of Christ, comparatively perfect as it doubtless was, was by no means free from that odious fraternity. There was one Ananias, a wealthy man, but ambitious of the renown of sanctity among the believers, who, with his wife Sapphira, determined to purchase a good name at a cheap rate. They, like others, sold their estate, and keeping back a certain portion of the purchase-money, laid the remainder at the apostles' feet, with a declaration that they had dedicated all to charitable purposes. It was necessary that at this stage of the gospel some striking example should be made, as well as some proof given that the inspired heads of the church were not to be deceived with impunity; and Ananias and Sapphira, after being reproved by St. Peter for their hypocrisy, were one after the other struck dead. It was a solitary instance in the history of the primitive church of a miracle wrought for the purpose of inflicting punishment; but it was not without its effect: "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things;" and miracles of healing and mercy being abundantly multiplied, Christianity daily and hourly enlarged her bounds.

Now then, again, the chief priests and Sadducees deemed it essential to interfere violently for the suppression of this pestilent heresy. The apostles were arrested, and cast into

a dungeon ; but God sent his angel that very night to deliver them, and they were again, on the following morning, in the temple teaching the people. So strange an occurrence could scarcely fail to strike even the obdurate and hardened Sadducees. They had delivered these men overnight into the keeping of trusty guards, yet they escaped, no one knew how, to commit again the offence for which they had been arrested ; and the reverence of the multitude was so far secured, that to act towards them with precipitate violence would have been hazardous. Under these circumstances, though the apostles were brought before the council, the members composing that body readily listened to one Gamaliel, who advised them to leave the new religion with its propagators to their fate ; because if the thing came from God they could not arrest it, if otherwise, it would fall to pieces of its own accord. Once more, therefore, the apostles were dismissed, after they had been scourged, and strictly enjoined to preach no more the gospel of salvation ; and they departed, not only resolute to go on with their great undertaking, "but rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake."

In this manner the great work was carried forward, till the number of converts had increased so much that the apostles found it necessary to consecrate a distinct body of men for the purpose of attending especially to the distribution of alms. With this view seven individuals were chosen by the body of the faithful, and recommended to the apostles or bishops, who, by the laying on of hands, ordained them to the place of deacons. The names of these men were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, all of them Hellenists, or Jews of the dispersion ; a circumstance sufficiently accounted for by the necessity which existed of placing the two classes on a footing of absolute equality. That they were all zealous in their calling we have every reason to believe, but the exertions of Stephen seem to have been at once more fervent and more efficacious than those of any of his brethren. So dauntless, indeed, was he in preaching the gospel, that he soon drew upon himself the hostility of the leading men among the incredulous, who suborned false witnesses to appear against him in the great council before which he was arraigned. Even here, however, Stephen's devotion

to his Master's service forsook him not. He proved, authoritatively from the scriptures of the Old Testament, that Jesus was the Christ, and expressed himself with so much energy, that when he looked towards heaven, the mob "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." But the influence of his enemies prevailed. A shout was raised that he spoke blasphemy, which the headstrong multitude soon took up, and Stephen* being dragged beyond the city-walls, had the honour, first of all our Saviour's disciples, to seal the profession of his faith with his blood. He was stoned to death, praying, like his Divine Exemplar, that God would not lay this sin to the charge of an infatuated populace.

Among the number of persons present at this disgraceful A. D. 33. graceful outrage was one Saul, a young man, a native of Tarsus, and a pupil of that Gamaliel of whom notice has lately been taken. This man entered so keenly into the sentiments of the unbelieving part of the community, that if he threw no stone with his own hand, he at least held the garments of those who stripped themselves for the murder; and his mistaken zeal so far from being satiated by that bloody tragedy, only gathered from it additional violence. He devoted himself from that hour to the eradication of Christianity, and committed the most grievous havoc among all such, no matter of what age, or sex, or station, as he had reason to suspect of a profession of the hated faith. The consequence of this persecution was, that the believers fled, with the exception of the apostles, from the capital, and sought refuge wherever they entertained a hope of finding it, in the districts round. Among others, Philip the deacon retired to Samaria, where he succeeded in making many converts; baptizing, among others, Simon, a pretender to sorcery; and not long afterward, Peter and John were despatched to confer those higher gifts of the Holy Spirit which Philip, from his rank in the hierarchy, was incapacitated from bestowing. The scene which followed is very remarkable. Simon, less than half a convert,

* It is to be observed, that at this time Judea was without a procurator; for Pilate had been disgraced, and Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was extremely considerate towards the Jews. Hence their temporary resumption of the power of life and death, which they did not enjoy when the Redeemer of mankind was crucified.

vet envying the power which the apostles appeared to possess, offered money to Peter and John as the price of a similar authority; upon which Peter, with well-founded indignation, exclaimed, "thy money perish with thee." The arch-heretic was grievously alarmed, if not converted to the truth, and we learn no more of his pretensions or proceedings for many years after.

The two apostles, after confirming the church at Samaria, and preaching with great effect in the villages round, returned to Jerusalem, while Philip proceeded towards Gaza, under the guidance of a heavenly monitor. A chariot overtook him on the road, in which sat an Ethiopian eunuch, a man high in authority with the queen of his own land, though a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The eunuch was returning from Jerusalem, whither he had gone up to be present at the celebration of the festival, and was deeply engaged in the perusal of the 53d chapter of Isaiah's prophecies. Philip immediately approached, and a conversation began, which ended in the conversion of the stranger to the faith. He was baptized in the first stream which crossed their path; and according to the tradition of the Abyssinians had the honour of laying the foundation-stone of Christianity in that land, of which he was a native.

In the mean while Saul, not content with the persecution which he had inflicted upon the believers at A. D. 34. Jerusalem, obtained from the sanhedrim a commission, which authorized him to pursue the fugitives from place to place, and bring them back prisoners to the capital. With this design he set out for Damascus, whither he had been given to understand that numbers were withdrawn; but ere he completed his journey an event befell, not less striking either in its immediate or remote consequences, than any connected with the promulgation of Christianity. He had arrived within a short distance of the city, when "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It was the voice of the Redeemer which thus smote upon his conscience with a power not to be resisted. The feelings, dispositions, will, and sentiments of the persecutor underwent a great and immediate change, and he rose from the earth, blind indeed to the forms of visible nature, but with the full blaze of truth

shining in his heart. He went on to Damascus an altered man ; where, being baptized by Ananias, one of the original seventy, he became the most active and successful of all who laboured for the promulgation of the religion which he once hated with so much rancour.

Saul had been struck blind by the light which streamed round him when he fell, but with the reception of baptism his sight returned ; and he lost not a moment in

A. D. 34. proclaiming his own conversion in every synagogue both in Damascus and in the country near. His

success in making converts was so brilliant, that the unbelieving Jews, doubly enraged at his apostacy, entered into a conspiracy to take away his life, which he defeated only by escaping over the wall by night, through the assistance of his friends, in a basket. He then proceeded to Jerusalem, where, though at first some suspicion seems to have been entertained of him, he was in the end well received ; for, being introduced to the apostles by Barnabas, an old acquaintance and fellow-student, he was admitted to the dignity of their order. As he had done elsewhere, he immediately began to preach Christ crucified in every quarter of the city ; but the hatred of his enemies again threatening his life, he was before long conducted by the brethren to Cesarea, from whence he proceeded to Tarsus, the place of his nativity.

In spite of these repeated attacks upon individuals the church at large enjoyed at this time profound repose, and the work of conversion was zealously carried on by Saul throughout Cilicia and Syria ; by Peter in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. Of the rest of the apostles, some went in one direction, some in another, James alone, as it would appear, remaining constantly in the capital ; and they all employed under them multitudes of presbyters and deacons, who spread the glad tidings of salvation far and near.

It chanced that Peter in his progress arrived, among other places, at Lydda, where he cured one Eneas of a palsy which had long afflicted him ; and the effect of the miracle was such, that the inhabitants, not of Lydda only, but of Saron, a neighbouring town, became ready converts to the faith. From Lydda Peter proceeded to Joppa, a place in which the gospel had already made some progress ; where he restored to life a woman named Dorcas, famous for her

piety and extensive charities. But the most remarkable occurrence which befell him here was, the removal of a prejudice from his mind under which both he and his brethren had hitherto laboured; Almighty God condescending to instruct him in the fact, that to salvation gentiles as well as Jews were become fully entitled.

The houses in eastern countries are generally built with flat roofs, and it was customary for the Jews, as often as the stated hours* of prayer came round, to ascend thither for the sake of paying their devotions. Peter was thus employed on the roof of the house where he lodged (that of Simon, a tanner, near the seashore) when, overcome with faintness and abstinence, his senses, to a certain degree, forsook him, and he fell into a trance, or waking dream. In this state "he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat." The apostle, however, mindful of the prohibitory clauses in the law, refused to pollute himself by tasting animals which were unclean; and he persisted in the refusal, notwithstanding the voice spake unto him again the second time, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This scene was repeated three several times, and then the vision passed away.

Recovering from his trance, Peter was yet lost in speculation as to the purport of what had passed, when he heard that there were three strangers below desirous to see him. He descended immediately, the Spirit of God silently admonishing him to follow his guides whithersoever they might lead, and he was conducted to Cesarea, to the house of one Cornelius, a Roman centurion, attached to the Italian cohort. There the design of the vision which had been vouchsafed to him in the morning was rendered at once clear. The pious Roman, pious because a pure theist, had been favoured with a command from on high to send for Peter, whom God had appointed to instruct him in the words

* The Jewish hours of prayer occurred three times a-day: at nine o'clock in the morning, at noon, and at three in the afternoon.

of life ; and the prejudices of the Jew, which might have stood in the way of God's designs, were removed by the method already described. Peter instantly proceeded to preach, to Cornelius and his household, Jesus the Messiah ; his instruction was received with avidity, and the Holy Ghost fell palpably and manifestly upon every member of his little congregation. No doubt could longer exist in the mind of the apostle that they, equally with the descendants of Abraham, were worthy to be admitted into Christ's flock, and they were forthwith regenerated by the administration of baptism: Yet, on his return to Jerusalem, Peter found that he had incurred the hostility of the more strict among the brethren, some false representation of the matter having been made by persons not too well disposed to the cause ; nor was it till all the circumstances of the case were fully explained, that they "held their peace and glorified God, that unto the gentiles also he had granted repentance unto life."

While Peter was thus employed in his Lord's service, others of the disciples, whom the first persecution had driven from Jerusalem, were busily and successfully occupied elsewhere. Among other places they came to Antioch, where intelligence of the conversion of Cornelius reached them ; and as they saw in that fact ample evidence that the word of life was not to be restricted in its course, they addressed themselves with equal industry to gentiles as to Jews. Great numbers were converted, whom the apostle Barnabas, taking Saul along with him, hastened to confirm ; indeed the multitude of believers in Antioch became, ere long, so considerable that there first they received the distinguishing appellation of Christians.

A. D. . . . The gospel had now been publicly preached for
43. nearly twelve years, not in Judea alone, but throughout a very large portion of the civilized world ; yet, with the exception of the partial cruelties perpetrated on the occasion of Stephen's martyrdom, nothing worthy of the name of persecution had been any where attempted. This exemption from suffering was doubtless necessary to enable the good seed to take root ; but to bring the fruit to perfection rain as well as sunshine is needed ; and the storm came at last with terrible violence from a quarter where

it had long threatened. The Jews, after being governed by a succession of Roman procurators, were at this time in the enjoyment of at least the shadow of independence; for Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, had been proclaimed king by the Emperor Claudius.*

One of the first acts of this prince after his arrival at Jerusalem was to order the execution, among other Christians, of James the brother of John; and seeing that the deed gratified his subjects, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. The apostle was accordingly thrust into prison, the tyrant intending to put him to death as soon as a convenient moment should arrive: but on the very night preceding the day which was to have witnessed his martyrdom an angel delivered him from his bands. Great was the joy of the church at this signal interference of Divine Providence in its favour; nor was there less cause of thankfulness when Agrippa shortly afterward, assuming to himself divine honours, was smitten at Cesarea with a loathsome and painful disease of which he died.

During the occurrence of these transactions at Jerusalem and Cesarea, Barnabas and Saul were fulfilling their ministry at Antioch, and receiving from the faithful there contributions, to be applied to the relief of the necessities of their brethren of Judea, over whom the Holy Spirit had forewarned them that a famine hung. With these timely supplies the apostles hastened to Jerusalem, which they reached soon after the death of Agrippa; and depositing their treasures in the hands of their brethren, they hurried back to their more immediate province, Antioch. But God had greater things in store for them than the superintendence of an established church, no matter how flourishing. They were warned by a vision to proceed into other parts, whither the word of the gospel of

* The succession of government both at Rome and Jerusalem ran thus:

Tiberius, the emperor, died A. D. 37, and was succeeded by Caius Caligula, who after a short reign of four years gave place to Claudius, the uncle of Caligula, and a weak and avaricious prince. He it was that gave to Agrippa the kingdom of Judea, with an extent of territory equal to that governed by his grandfather, as the reward of his services in gaining over to him the troops of the senate. Agrippa's immediate predecessor was Publius Marcellus, the successor of P. Marcellus, who on the banishment of Pilate by Tiberius had been nominated procurator of Judea.

peace had not yet extended ; and as soon as they had received the solemn benedictions of their fellow-labourers, they took with them Mark the Evangelist, and set out.

The first place which they reached was Seleucia, whence they embarked for Cyprus, and in the city of Salamis began their ministerial labours. From Salamis they crossed the island to Paphos, where the governor, Sergius Paulus, held his court ; and receiving intelligence that he would willingly hear them, they hastened to introduce themselves into his presence. But their efforts to convert the governor were grievously thwarted by one Bar-jesus, an impious pretender to astrology, till God at Saul's word smote him suddenly with blindness in the face of a thronged assembly. The governor could no longer halt between two opinions : he embraced the truth ; and Saul, in memory of this distinguished success, assumed the name of Paul, which he ever afterward bore.

The next place which the apostles visited was Perga in Pamphylia, where Mark, dissatisfied with their wandering mode of life, quitted them. Their sojourn here, however, was brief ; for Antioch in Pisidia attracted their attention, and they proceeded thither under the persuasion that it opened a wider field for their labours. They were not deceived in their expectations ; multitudes both of Jews and gentiles attended upon their ministry, of whom some few gladly professed the faith, though of the Jews by far the greater proportion continued obstinate, and blasphemed the name of the Lord. Then Paul and Barnabas, after sharply rebuking their countrymen, addressed themselves almost exclusively to the gentiles ; which so irritated the Israelites that a violent tumult was excited, and the apostles were in the end driven from the place, as well as from the tract of country adjacent and dependent upon it.

The apostles fled first to Iconium, from whence, however, they were by the influence of the Jews of Antioch very speedily expelled, and afterward to Lystra, a city in the same province. Here Paul healing a lame man, whom his preaching had previously converted, the whole city was thrown into commotion ; and the idolatrous inhabitants would have worshipped Paul as Mercury, and Barnabas as Jupiter. But when they resisted this mad attempt, and went on to speak to the people of the

true God, the admiration of the giddy throng was changed into hostility; and certain persons from Iconium arriving at the moment, so inflamed their feelings that the apostles were rudely assaulted. Nevertheless Paul, though grievously wounded, escaped with life, and retired along with Barnabas, who seems to have eluded the fury of the populace, to Derbe.

From Derbe the apostles passed to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the several churches, and ordaining fit men to officiate in each congregation; after which they proceeded through Pisidia to Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia. They next held their course to Antioch in Syria, whence they had set out about three years before, where they reported their great and unlooked-for success to the brethren, and remained some time stationary.

Paul and Barnabas were thus situated when there arrived from Jerusalem certain converts of the Pharisaic sect, whose attachment to the ceremonial law had undergone no diminution in consequence of their reception of Christianity. In the height of their mistaken zeal these men would have imposed upon the believers, no matter from what stock or family descended, the burden of the Levitical code; insisting that no man could be saved except he were circumcised after the manner of Moses. A bitter and somewhat perilous controversy ensued; to determine which it was at length agreed that a deputation of trustworthy persons should be sent to Jerusalem, in order to obtain the judgment of a general council of the church; and Paul and Barnabas being selected to discharge this important duty, set out upon their journey. It led to the happiest results;

A. D. for the apostles assembled in council came to the
52. resolution that an observance of any portion of the

Mosaic law was no longer essential; and the Christian church was in consequence freed from a burden too grievous to be borne.

One memorable clause was indeed inserted into the body of the pastoral epistle; by which the converts were commanded "to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things slaughtered, and from fornication." The propriety of two of these prohibitions at all seasons is sufficiently obvious; while for the other two the peculiar circumstances of the times furnished ample grounds.

How long Paul and Barnabas continued at Antioch after their return thither with the above decree we possess no means accurately to determine. That the sojourn must have been considerable, however, is rendered manifest by the fact that Peter, notwithstanding the decision of a council in which he himself assisted, gave just umbrage to Paul; by avoiding, in this very city, the society of such converts as had not undergone circumcision; and, as he could scarcely fall into so glaring an inconsistency till the memory of what passed at Jerusalem had begun to wax faint, it is probable that his brother apostles continued their residence at Antioch for several months. Be this, however, as it may, we know that the dispute between the two apostles ran so high that from thenceforth they carefully avoided to labour in the same division of the vineyard. Peter became the apostle of the Jews, in the strictest sense of that term, bestowing all his care upon the children of the chosen stock; while Paul addressed himself chiefly, though not exclusively, to the gentiles.

It was probably about the year A. D. 53 that Paul and Barnabas made ready to visit the churches which they had planted during their former excursion along the shore of the Mediterranean. A dispute now arose on the subject of Mark, who seems to have again attached himself to their fortunes; Barnabas wishing to make him the companion of their journey, while Paul resolutely objected to the arrangement; and the two friends parted, the former directing his course to Cyprus, while the latter, carrying Silas along with him, travelled through Syria and Cilicia.

From the date of this separation St. Luke's narrative, the only connected account which we possess of the adventures and sufferings of the first teachers of Christianity, is devoted almost exclusively to the history of St. Paul. We learn from it that the apostle, arriving at Lystra, by way of Derbe, found one Timotheus, or Timothy, the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother, of whom he speedily made a convert, and whom, having caused him to be circumcised, in order to save appearances with the more zealous of his maternal country, he henceforth attached to his own company. He seems previously indeed to have visited Crete, to the superintendence of the church of which he consecrated Titus; but this we gather, not from the

treatise of St. Luke, but from the writings of St. Paul himself. He then passed through Phrygia and Galatia, where he was welcomed with the utmost deference, and would have proceeded from Mysia to Bithynia but for the occurrence of a Divine vision, which induced him to turn towards Macedonia. He accordingly took shipping at Troas, and touching at Samothracia, landed on the second day at Neapolis, from whence he pushed on to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the second city in point of importance in the province.

Here Paul's success in making converts was considerable; among whom Lydia, a female dealer in purple, is particularly mentioned; but his triumph was not destined to be more free from suffering at Philippi than elsewhere. It chanced that he cured of a species of demoniacism, called by St. Luke "the possession of a spirit of divination," a young woman, the servant of certain persons who made money by the exposure of her infirmity. The mercenary unbelievers, perceiving that their source of profits was removed, immediately raised a party against the disciples, asserting that they were Jews, come to Philippi with the view of teaching a religion different from that established by law; upon which Paul, with his companions, were first publicly scourged and then committed to prison by order of the magistrates. But God turned the insults thus offered to his servants to a good account. An earthquake bursting open the doors of the prison, and causing the chains to fall from the captives' hands, the keeper not doubting that they had effected their escape, would have destroyed himself in despair, had not Paul arrested the movement. Then indeed the keeper, convinced that his prisoners were under the protection of an especial Providence, fell on his knees before them, and rose up to be received, with his whole house, into the bosom of the church. Nor was the result of this adventure less remarkable as far as it affected the personal honour, if we may so speak, of Paul and his company. The magistrates, ascertaining that the men whom they had thus wantonly insulted were Roman citizens, and, as a necessary consequence, persons of some note, were well pleased to compound matters, by publicly apologizing to Paul for their conduct, and immediately leading him and his friends from their place of undeserved confinement.

The next city which St. Paul visited was Amphipolis, from whence he travelled through Apollonia to Thessalonica;* where, for three successive Sabbath-days, he preached to the Jews in the synagogues. A tumult, however, arising, in which his host, Jason, suffered violence, Paul retired with Silas to Berea; where the people appeared well disposed to hear his doctrine, and to weigh his assertions with impartiality; but his enemies from Thessalonica pursuing him thither, he was fain to escape to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy to comfort such converts as had been made.

The city of Athens, at that time the chief seat of literature and the sciences, presented a peculiarly attractive field of labour to a man of St. Paul's ardent zeal and refined taste. He accordingly disputed with the Jews in the synagogues till the attention both of them and of the heathens was attracted, and he gladly availed himself of the opportunity which Athenian curiosity furnished of preaching, both to the stoics and Epicureans, Jesus and the resurrection. It does not appear, however, that his success was commensurate with the judgment displayed by him in conducting the argument. Most of the self-conceited philosophers, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, mocked, though many said, "We will hear thee again of this matter;" but the number that "clave unto him and believed" appears to have been small, though it included Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others.

Paul had been all this while alone, but he was joined soon after the above disputation by Timothy, who gave him a distressing account of the persecutions to which the brethren of Thessalonica had since his departure been subjected. The great apostle immediately sent Timothy back to strengthen and comfort them in their dangers; and that holy man returning not long afterward with a favourable account of their perseverance, Paul testified his satisfaction by addressing to the Thessalonians his first Epistle. He then

* From this city St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, the earliest of the productions of his pen which have been preserved, was written. Its design was to keep the converts on their guard against the sophisms of the new Pharisaic sect, which, founded by Judas of Galilee, strove to propagate the religion of Moses under the disguise of Christianity.

collected his original company about him, and moving to Corinth made converts there of the Jew Aquila and his wife Priscilla, whom the Emperor Claudius had banished from Rome, and who gladly bestowed upon their instructor the rites of hospitality.

Paul's sojourn in Corinth extended to the space of a full year and a half, during which his exertions were ceaseless, and his success very remarkable. Tumults were, indeed, from time to time excited, particularly by the unbelieving Jews, who in great numbers dwelt here; but by the favour or sound discretion of Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, they led to no evil results, and the ministry of the Word was not interrupted. Nor was the apostle unmindful of the spiritual wants of other places which he found it impracticable to visit in person. He wrote here his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which he cheered the brethren under their sufferings, and endeavoured to correct certain erroneous notions which they had encouraged on the subject of the day of judgment; summing up all by a touching exhortation that they should not "become weary in well-doing."

From Corinth Paul, carrying Aquila and Priscilla along with him, proceeded to Ephesus, where, being anxious to spend the season of the approaching passover at Jerusalem, his stay was very brief. He took shipping almost immediately for Cesarea, in Palestine, from whence he hastened to the capital. But he remained there only till the end of the feast, when he again made a progress through Galatia and Phrygia; and confirming in the several churches scattered over these districts once more joined his friends at Ephesus. It gave him infinite delight to find that they had not been idle during his absence; many converts were made, among whom was Apollos,* an Alexandrian Jew of great learning and upright heart, who, removing to Corinth, became exceedingly useful in "watering where Paul had planted."

The number of John's disciples, that is to say, of persons imperfectly initiated into the mysteries of the Divine nature, seems to have been at Ephesus considerable; at least,

* This man, though a convert only to the principles of John the Baptist, when Aquila and Priscilla became acquainted with him, was nevertheless exceedingly active in disputing with the Jews concerning the character and offices of the Messiah. He became, of course, still more zealous after he had heard of a truth that Jesus was the Christ.

we find Paul on his return thither, completing the religious education of several, who till he spake to them on the subject "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." These the apostle confirmed, God being pleased to accompany the ceremony with a palpable effusion of his spirit; and the effect was doubtless very important in furthering the great work of conversion. Among the Jews, indeed, little progress was made; for though the cures wrought in Ephesus were both more numerous and more surprising than in any other city of Asia Minor, they obstinately refused to be convinced; nay, some of them, making light of the whole matter, presumed to try how far they might perform miracles, by pronouncing over a possessed person the cabalistic name of Jesus. But their impiety met with the reward which it deserved, the demoniac driving them from the house "wounded and naked;" while the effect of their failure was to produce an increased reverence throughout the whole of Ionia both for Christ and his ministers.

While Paul was thus employed among the gentiles, Peter was no less diligent in preaching to the Jews of the dispersion wherever he found them. He seems, indeed, to have kept his face steadily directed for a season towards the east; for we find him addressing his catholic or general epistle from Babylon; and the best authorities are agreed that by this place is meant, not the imperial Rome, but the remains of the ancient capital of Assyria. The epistle is full of sound and practical advice, conveyed with all the fervour incident to the disposition of the writer; though of the effect produced by it upon the minds of men in general we are not enabled to speak.

For two years Paul continued at Ephesus, "disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus;" at the close of which period he determined to revisit Macedonia and Achaia, and, wintering at Corinth, to celebrate the feast of pentecost at Jerusalem. With this view he sent two of his faithful attendants, Timothy and Erastus, before him; he himself remaining behind, in order to address his first Epistle to the Corinthians, a document from which we learn that great abuses already prevailed in that church, in matters not merely doctrinal but practical. This done he prepared to set out; but ere he could carry his design into

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execution he found himself involved in a serious and to all appearance a dangerous dispute with the idolaters. There was a man named Demetrius, who made a considerable profit by the fabrication of silver images of the goddess Diana; and who, perceiving his trade to be seriously affected by the successful preaching of Paul, strove to excite his fellow-citizens to acts of violence. A prodigious clamour arose, in the midst of which two of Paul's companions in travel, Gaius and Aristarchus, were dragged before the civil magistrate; and Paul himself escaped a similar or perhaps a worse treatment only through the exertions of the brethren, who hindered him from appearing in public. But the magistrate, though no Christian, was a man of probity and sense. He saw through the motive which directed the movements of the populace, and declaring that the privileges of the city might be endangered by the maltreatment of men guilty of no crime, "he dismissed the assembly." No more was heard of the wild beasts to whom the mob talked of casting the Christians; and Paul, having appointed Timothy bishop of Ephesus, departed by the route of Troas for Macedonia.

Paul delayed in Macedonia a sufficient time to enable him to confirm in all the region round as far as Illyricum; and he had here the satisfaction to learn from Titus that his Epistle to the Corinthians had been productive of the best effects. Nevertheless, as he was given at the same time to understand that the peace of that church was disturbed by vain babblers, who made him in particular the object of their attack, he wrote his second Epistle, partly in vindication of his own authority, partly to modify certain sentences which he had summarily pronounced in his first. He then proceeded to Achaia, where he sojourned principally in Corinth for three months, that he might compose his elaborate and recondite Epistle to the Roman converts.

It is worthy of remark, that large contributions had every where been made among the churches of Greece and Asia Minor, to alleviate the distresses of their fellow-Christians then suffering severely, from various causes, in Judea. These were readily intrusted to Paul, who proposed to carry them up by the shortest route into Syria; but hearing that a plan had been devised by the Jews for his murder, he changed his course, and travelled through Macedonia. He

took shipping at Philippi, where with his *cortège* he had passed the season of the passover, and landing at Troas, not only spent a week there, but restored to life a young man who was killed by a fall during divine service. He then proceeded on foot to Assos, from thence by sea to Mytelene, and coasting Chios, landed at Trogyllium; from whence he proceeded to Miletus, to meet the heads of the Ephesian church, that he might solemnly charge them to relax nothing in their duty. This done, he travelled with his companions to Coos, Rhodes, and Patara, where finding a ship about to weigh anchor for Phœnicia, he was safely transported to Tyre. Here the holy company spent some days, with great satisfaction to themselves as well as to the resident believers; but neither persuasions, nor assurances of coming evil could deter Paul from prosecuting his journey. He set out at the end of the week for Jerusalem, and reached it without the occurrence of any incident deserving of particular notice.

A. D. St. Paul's first business in Jerusalem was to present himself to James and the brethren, by whom he

60. was easily persuaded to yield a little to the prejudices of the place, and to enter the temple after the fashion of a Nazarite about to present his offering at the accomplishment of a vow. All his care failed, however, in shielding him from the violence of his countrymen. He was observed by certain men who had frequently seen him in Asia, concerting with Trophimus, a gentile convert, and a native of Ephesus, and a cry was immediately raised that he had polluted the sanctity of the temple by carrying thither a heathen and uncircumcised person. A violent commotion ensued. His very life, indeed, was endangered, owing to the fury of the populace; and would have been sacrificed, but for the prompt interference of Claudius Lysias, the Roman governor, who, with much difficulty extricated him from his perils, and lodged him for safety in the castle. It is true that Lysias, before committing him to custody, gave permission that he should address a few words to the Jews; but his speech, as it tended to explain the circumstances under which he became a convert to Christianity, increased rather than allayed the popular indignation. The governor, seeing this, commanded him to be scourged; and it was only by his declaring that he had

the honour to be a Roman citizen that he escaped so grievous an indignity.

On the following day Lysias, willing to gratify the Jews, brought Paul to plead his own cause before the sanhedrim. It was not to be expected that even-handed justice would, by such a court, be administered to a man in his circumstances; and we accordingly find that he had scarcely entered upon his defence when he was, by order of the high-priest, rudely smitten in the face. But Paul, after sharply rebuking his assailant, contrived to throw dissension among his judges, by asserting that it was on the subject of the resurrection that he was arraigned. A mighty division instantly took place between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, of whom the assembly was composed, and Paul was, during the contest, removed by Lysias, and again lodged in the castle. Finally, a conspiracy to murder his prisoner having been detected, Lysias sent him under a strong escort to Cesarea, where Claudius Felix, the procurator for the time being, kept his court; and there he was lodged in a place of safety till the procurator should find leisure for inquiring into the circumstances under which his arrest took place.

Paul underwent two trials, if such they deserve to be termed, before Felix; first, when his accusers from Jerusalem appeared by their advocate against him, and a second time when the procurator with his Jewish wife Drusilla,* to gratify their own curiosity, summoned him before them. But though in the first instance he proved his innocence of any crime against the state; and in the second, by reasoning "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," caused Felix to tremble on his seat, he failed in attaining his liberty; and he was found a prisoner on the succeeding year by Portius Festus, who succeeded Felix in the office of procurator.

A. D. Hoping better things from their new master, and
61. trusting in some degree to his ignorance of their customs, the sanhedrim no sooner heard of Festus's arrival in the country than they applied, though with the design of assassinating him on his journey, to have Paul

* She was the sister of Agrippa the younger, and was married to Azezus, King of the Emesseniens, whom Felix prevailed upon her to abandon.

delivered over to their jurisdiction. To this the new procurator would not consent; and the deputation from the council failing to prove their charges against him, the apostle had every right to expect that he would be restored to liberty; but he was disappointed. Festus, willing to ingratiate himself with the Jewish nation, not only kept Paul bound, but hinted to him that his voluntary submission to the authority of the sanhedrim would be acceptable; upon which Paul, greatly to his surprise, appealed, as he was entitled to do, to the emperor. The appeal could not be refused; and Festus, piqued as well as startled by his prisoner's boldness, told him after conferring with his council that "to Cesar he should go."

While Christianity was thus forcing its way into every part of the Roman empire, Rome itself, as well as Syria and Palestine, was subject to numerous changes both of rulers and systems of government. The emperor Claudius, dying by poison, was succeeded by the son of his wife, Claudius Nero, one of the most cold-blooded and remorseless tyrants that ever disgraced the human form. Under him and his immediate predecessor, four different men including Felix had filled the office of procurator of Judea; and now, in the year 60, Felix was in his turn recalled to make way for Portius Festus. At this time the provinces of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, Paneas, and Abilene, together with Julias in Perea and that part of Galilee which included Tarichea and Tiberias, were united into a separate kingdom under Agrippa, the son of the prince by whose order James suffered martyrdom, and who himself perished miserably "because he gave not God the glory." The appointment of Festus was no sooner notified to Agrippa than he went up with his sister Beronice to Cesarea, where they remained for some time as honoured guests of the new procurator. It was on this occasion that Festus, among other topics of conversation, informed them of Paul's strange arrest and still stranger appeal to Cesar. Their curiosity was strongly excited; they requested and obtained permission to hear the apostle speak in his own defence; and Paul not being disinclined to plead the cause of Christianity before them, they were amply gratified by his eloquence. But though Agrippa, struck by the force of Paul's reasoning, exclaimed, "almost thou persuadest me

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to be a Christian," no step could now be taken to effect his discharge. Towards one who asserted his right to be heard at the tribunal of the emperor even mercy could not be extended by an inferior authority; and Paul was, in consequence, sent back to prison, with an avowal on the part of his judges that had he not appealed to Cesar he might have been set at liberty.

The removal of Paul to Rome being now fully determined on, he was with certain other prisoners embarked on board of ship, under the escort of a guard, commanded by the centurion Julius. For a short time the voyage seems to have been agreeable enough; for the centurion was well-disposed towards Paul, and he and his companions were permitted to land and refresh at Sidon; but the breeze gradually heading them, their progress was afterward slow, and many days elapsed ere they reached Myra in Lycia. Here they were removed into another vessel, that in which they had originally embarked proceeding no further; but the weather being squally and the winds baffling, they were compelled, after a tedious passage, to seek shelter in "the Fair Havens," a port in Crete. It was the advice of Paul that they should not endeavour to prosecute the voyage to an end till the spring; but he was overruled by the master and owners of the ship, and a fine south wind happening to blow, they put to sea on the following morning. No great while elapsed ere both the centurion and the master found ample reason to regret their precipitancy. A storm arose, which continued without intermission for the space of fourteen days, and every effort on the part of the crew to keep the vessel in her course proved abortive. She was driven they knew not whither, and it was only the spectacle of breakers on their lee which at last warned them that land was not very distant.

When the breakers were first distinguished it was night, and to hinder the ship, if possible, from striking, several anchors were let go. This done, the mariners began to think of providing for their own safety; and had already lowered the boats for the purpose of abandoning the wreck, when Paul, who had cheered the drooping spirits of the soldiers by assurances that no lives should be lost, pointed out and severely censured their design. The boats were immediately cut adrift by the guard; and all parties being

now involved in a common danger, the energies of all were equally directed to avert it.

As soon as day dawned a creek or estuary was discovered, into which, if it were possible to steer the ship, a safe roadstead would be found. The cables were accordingly cut; but an unexpected eddy catching the vessel, threw her bows on a sandbank, in a position which exposed her already weakened stern to the full violence of the waves. The consequences were not different from what might have been expected. The people were scarcely enabled to lash themselves to spars and rafts ere the ship went to pieces, and the wreck was drifted piecemeal to the shore. No lives, however, were lost. These, indeed, had been granted to Paul's prayers by Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death; and hence, the whole company, amounting to two hundred and sixty-seven individuals, reached the land in safety.

The place on which Paul and his companions were cast was the island of Melita, now called Malta, on the coast of Sicily. It was inhabited by a race of utter barbarians, whose natural sympathy, however, urged them to pay every attention to the unfortunate strangers thus thrown among them. They lighted large fires, supplied the men freely with food, and bestowed upon them every kindness which their limited means would allow; and Paul in particular soon became to them an object of peculiar attention. It chanced, that while he warmed himself, a viper, darting from a bundle of wood, fastened upon his hand, which he shook off without suffering the slightest inconvenience. The poor savages, when they saw no mortal consequences follow, were exceedingly astonished, and considered him to be a god, whom but a moment before they had regarded as an impious and devoted homicide.

For three months Paul and his company dwelt at Malta, being sumptuously entertained by Publius, the Roman governor, whom the apostle cured of a grievous distemper, extending also his powers of healing to others of the inhabitants. At the end of that period, however, they again took ship; and without the intervention of any other accident or misfortune, reached Puteoli, or Pozzuoli, in Naples.

Here about a week was spent in the society of
A. D. certain brethren, residents of the place; after which
62. they set forward for Rome, where Paul was received

with great joy by the whole body of believers. He was treated, moreover, with the utmost respect by the heathen authorities, who permitted him to live under surveillance in a hired house ; and having effectually cleared himself to the heads of his own nation from the suspicion that he came to bring any charge against them, he gave himself up entirely to the propagation of gospel truth. Nor was it by preaching alone that he strove while at Rome to advance the interests of Christianity. Besides his Epistle to Philemon, in favour of a runaway slave named Onesimus, St. Paul despatched from thence several pastoral letters, one to the church at Philippi,* another to that of Ephesus, and a third to the believers resident at Colosse ; while his last and most elaborate treatise, the Epistle to the Hebrews, is believed to have been penned, if not at Rome, certainly previous to his departure from Italy.

While Paul was thus employed both at Rome and elsewhere, James, the brother of our Lord, exerted himself no less manfully at Jerusalem ; when he encouraged and instructed the converts, wherever scattered, by his plain and intelligible epistle. But he was not long permitted
 A. D. after the departure of Paul as a prisoner to hold his
 62. course undisturbed. The Jews, taking advantage of a period of anarchy occasioned by the death of Festus, dragged the apostle before Ananias the high-priest, who commanded him on pain of death publicly to renounce Christ. With this view he was carried to the battlements of the temple, in order that all Jerusalem might be witnesses to his apostacy, and when he steadily refused to blaspheme, the infuriated populace cast him down headlong. He was grievously bruised by the fall, and his miseries were ended by a heavy blow from a club while praying on his knees that God would forgive his murderers.

Under what circumstances Paul obtained his liberty, as no authentic record has come down, it is impossible for us

* The object of the Epistle to the Philippians is mainly to counteract the designs of the Judaising sect, and to recommend humility, brotherly love, and courage under afflictions. That to the Ephesians enters somewhat more profoundly into the discussion of the main articles of a Christian's faith ; besides being full of moral and practical lessons. The Epistle to the Colossians condemns the tenets of such as hold that angels and saints ought to be addressed as mediators between God and man.

decidedly to relate. The most probable conjecture is, that his countrymen, conscious of their inability to bring any serious charge against him, never appeared before the imperial tribunal; and that the apostle, like other prisoners
 A. D. 63. unaccused, was, at the end of two years, discharged by proclamation. Be this, however, as it may, we collect, partly from his own writings, partly from the writings of the fathers, that he passed from Italy into Spain; that after a sojourn there of some months, he returned to Judea; that he sailed from thence to Crete; that from
 A. D. 64. Crete he proceeded to Philippi, and so on to Macedonia, from whence his first Epistle to Timothy was written. It is further stated, that from the same place, and in the same year, his letter to Titus was despatched; that in the year following he again crossed over into
 A. D. 65. Asia; visited Timothy at Ephesus, and left Trophimus sick at Miletus; and that, returning to Rome, he was cast into prison by Nero, in consequence of the conversion of that tyrant's favourite concubine. Finally, we gather, that from his dungeon, where all but Onesiphorus forsook him, his second Epistle to Timothy was written, and that he suffered martyrdom by being beheaded in the summer of the year A. D. 66.

If the preceding history of the latter days of St. Paul be both meager and imperfect, the account which alone we are enabled to give of the fate of his brother-apostles is, we regret to say, still less satisfactory. Of Peter's wanderings, for example, after the year 52, we know nothing, except upon an authority which is not much to be trusted. That he came to Rome in the year 65, seems indeed to be universally admitted; and that there as well as elsewhere he was active in his Master's service his second Epistle bears ample testimony; but whether this was his first or his second visit to the capital of the world commentators are not agreed. The date and manner of his death, however, are perfectly ascertained. He was crucified with his head to the ground, on the same day when Paul died by the sword.

Of Andrew, the brother of Peter, all that can be asserted as authentic amounts to this: that after a life spent actively in the propagation of the gospel, he received the crown of martyrdom, by order of Ægeus, the proconsul of Achaia,

at Patras. Simon, again, is reported to have suffered death in Britain, Thomas in Judea, Philip at Hierapolis in Phrygia, and Bartholomew, or Daniel, in Armenia; while Matthias laid down his life for the truth in Cappadocia, Barnabas at Salamis, and Jude, the author of the epistle which bears his name, in Persia. The last-mentioned apostle, however, survived all his brethren except John; for his letter was not written, according to the best authorities, till about the year 66 or 67.

There remains but one other of the original attendants on our Lord, concerning whose fortunes it is necessary to say a few words; we mean John, the beloved disciple, and the latest of the evangelists. We are informed by ecclesiastical historians, that on the death of the blessed Virgin, which occurred fifteen years after Christ's ascension, John was directed by the Holy Ghost to penetrate into Asia; where he steadily opposed himself to the numerous heresies which too soon began to disturb the peace of the church. Of all who had listened to the Messiah's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem John alone survived to witness its fulfilment; which occurred, as the reader need scarcely be informed, under Vespasian, in the year 70. But his life, though protracted beyond the ordinary course of nature, was not more than the lives of other primitive Christians exempt

from trials. During the persecution raised by Domitian, he was sent in chains to Rome, from whence he
 A. D. 85. was exiled to Patmos, and condemned to work in the mines; a sentence which he endured not only with patience, but with exemplary cheerfulness. It was during this interval that his sublime Book of Revelations was written, partly in reproof of existing abuses, partly as prophetic of events to come; of which, however, as all attempts to explain its direct purport have hitherto failed, we decline to say any thing.

On the death of Domitian, and the repeal of his
 A. D. iniquitous enactments, John regained his liberty, and
 96. returning to Ephesus, where Timothy had lately died, he assumed the pastoral charge of that metropolitan church. Here he wrote his three epistles, of which the first is catholic, and directed against the false doctrines of various heretical sects of the day; more especially against the followers of Cerinthus, otherwise called Gnostics, and

the Docetæ.* The remaining two are private letters, addressed, the one to a lady of rank, the other to Gaius, a generous and hospitable man, who had once at least the happiness to entertain St. Paul. John was ninety-seven years of age when he composed his beautiful Gospel, with the double view of supplying such defects as he observed in the works of his predecessors, and of establishing the great truth of our Lord's divinity. He died peacefully at Ephesus in the hundredth year of his age, 100. and the third of the reign of the Emperor Trajan.

The portion of sacred history of which the substance has just been given is, perhaps, of all others the most free from objections dependent for their force upon contradictions real or imaginary in the characters and conduct of the men whose names are introduced into it. If we admit the truth of the principal details (and when the success of the first teachers, as connected with their situation of life, is considered, we really know not how these are to be questioned) all minor matters fall into the shade; for the differences between Paul and Barnabas, and even the weakness of Peter, are mere illustrations of the waywardness and instability of human nature. Neither Peter nor Barnabas, nor even Paul, were, as moral agents, absolutely perfect; and hence the account of their personal differences so far from taking away, only adds to the general credibility of the whole history. In like manner St. Paul's conduct when brought before the sanhedrim was not only innocent but perfectly justifiable; inasmuch as the main question for which he was called to account by his enemies was the doctrine of the resurrection through the merits of Christ. Instead, therefore, of vindicating the veracity of the historian from charges in themselves frivolous and vexatious, we shall close our labours by briefly stating what we conceive to have been the main design of the several writers of those epistles with which our canon of Scripture concludes.

The peculiarity of circumstances under which the majority of St. Paul's Epistles were written has been noticed

* The Gnostics taught that Jesus was a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, on whom the *Æon*, or super-angelic being, descended at his baptism, but left him before his death; the Docetæ, that Jesus was an incorporeal phantom, in which the *Æon*, Christ, or Divine nature presented itself to mankind.

in the progress of the foregoing narrative. With the exception of those to the Romans and to the Hebrews, they were all called forth by the occurrence of some calamity, or the prevalence of some heresy, or the spread of some moral depravity among the believers: and hence the tone of one not unfrequently differs in a very remarkable degree from the tone of another. In like manner the treatises drawn up by Peter, James, Jude, and John are all subject, in a greater or less extent, to the same observation; for though of these the larger portion are catholic, there is not one which appears not to have owed its existence to some peculiar cause affecting the morals or belief of the church. Hence we find Peter in one of his letters alluding to the errors in faith which a misapprehension of Paul's meaning had occasioned, while John, without hesitation, avows that he wrote chiefly to oppose the growing heresies of the Gnostics, the Docetæ, and others. We have stated these facts, not for the purpose of throwing discredit upon any portion of the sacred writings, as if they referred to events and circumstances long since passed away; but to warn our readers not to be led into the notion that in any important, far less in any essential point, one apostle ever contradicts another. It is true that while one seems to magnify faith, condemning as useless the works of the law, another speaks more fully of morals, at the hazard of appearing to hold faith at naught; but neither here nor elsewhere is there the slightest contrariety between them, as a moment's consideration may serve to show.

Whenever St. Paul represents "the works of the law" as inadequate to secure man's salvation, he alludes to one or other of two things; he either refers to the ceremonial law of the Jews, which the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross had fulfilled, or to the absence of all claim of natural right in the very best of human beings to a state of eternal happiness beyond the grave. His doctrine is, and it is the same which his Divine Master had taught before him, that when we have done our best we are unprofitable servants, and that we shall owe our acceptance at last only to the merits of Him "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." This doctrine is to us so perfectly intelligible and consistent, that it may surprise the less-informed to be told, that among the first converts, especially from Judaism,

there were many who perverted it to the worst purposes. These men placed out of view the same apostle's exhortation, "by a patient continuance in well-doing to seek for glory, honour, and immortality," and forgot, or affected to forget, that it is man's business "to make himself meet, with Divine aid, to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." They accordingly converted "the liberty of the gospel into licentiousness;" led grossly immoral lives, yet professed that because they believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah, their salvation was secure. It was to correct this mortal error that St. Paul's contemporary declared, "that faith without works is dead;" thus proving, that between faith, which worketh by love, and unfruitful belief, there is the widest possible difference.

Again, a variety of expressions will be found, more especially in the writings of St. Paul, apparently, though but apparently, contradictory of one another; as, for example, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, where in one place he reproves them as guilty of incest, fornication, and drunkenness at the Lord's table; and at another addresses them as "washed, justified, and sanctified." Now it is to be observed here, that the terms "washed, justified, and sanctified," all refer to the same thing, namely, the admission of the Corinthians by baptism into Christ's church; a state, doubtless, of grace, but not of perfection. St. Paul, therefore, so far from contradicting, adds force to his former reasoning; for his object is to show that among men thus favoured by God no such vices ought to be known. The very same language might, with perfect propriety, be addressed at this day by any Christian minister to his congregation.

In like manner we find this same St. Paul at once the most earnest in his persuasions to the brethren to regulate their lives according to the precepts of the gospel, and an unqualified assertor "that whom God did foreknow, them he did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate, them he justified." Now we take it for granted that no consistent believer in the doctrine of particular election will for a moment suppose that his reasonings, or indeed any moral inducements whatever, can have the smallest weight in leading one man into the path of salvation who would not find that path were no such inducements applied; because,

to admit the utility of incentives, yet acknowledge the irresistibility of a Divine decree, is a glaring and palpable contradiction. St. Paul, however, not only advises, but adjures his converts to lead virtuous and holy lives, assuring them that their reward will be, for Christ's sake, an eternity of happiness: would he have done this had he believed that God from all eternity has chosen his own favourites and none besides? We are not going to lead our readers into the mazes of the Calvinistic controversy; to a due consideration of which, indeed, our space would not suffice; but if the above remarks be just, it is perfectly apparent that St. Paul, in spite of his strong language, could be no Calvinist.* The phrase in question, therefore, seems to amount to this, and to nothing more: that God, possessing the faculty of omniscience, necessarily foreknows by whom his religion will be embraced in truth, and predestinates or determines to bestow upon them the everlasting crown which he has promised; though this foreknowledge no more overrules the freedom of the human will than our foreknowledge that the sun shall rise to-morrow is the cause of that luminary's appearance. We readily allow that with beings possessed of finite understandings it is extremely difficult to separate the ideas of foreknowledge and predestination: but the difficulty lies to us in comprehending the idea of a mind which sees things before they actually take place; not in distinguishing between knowledge and absolute causation. In plain language, we who exist in time can form no notion of a being with whom time or the succession of ideas is a nonentity; yet such must be the case with the great Cause of all things, who dwells, where time is not, in eternity.

Besides these there are various lesser points which we deem it unnecessary to notice at length; such as St. Paul's comparisons between a state of nature and a state of grace, his definition of the carnal mind, and his exhortation to put off the old man. All these, it may be shortly affirmed, relate partly to those propensities to evil which attach by nature to the best of men, partly to the glaring and gross vices of which the first Christians previous to their conver-

* We ought to apologize for the use of this term, but we are unacquainted with any other so suitable to the occasion.

sion had been guilty. But the grand design both of St. Paul and of the other authors of the Epistles was the same. They endeavoured to convince mankind that "there is none other name given among men by which they can be saved except the name of Jesus;" that no man by his own merits can save his own soul; yet that all are equally bound to serve God in their several stations by performing conscientiously the duties imposed upon them. Thus, while faith in Christ is the foundation upon which all equally rest, the superstructure which all equally desire to raise is universal holiness; not because either faith or holiness is the instrument of our salvation, but because without them we shall not be found worthy of the inheritance which Christ, and Christ alone, has obtained for us.

THE END.

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